

Problem Scratching & How to Stop It

NEVER DECLAW!!!

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Posted on Oct 3, 2016

Is it possible to have a cat AND nice furniture in the same house? ...YES! With proper training and by providing your feline friend with the necessary tools, you can have nice furniture – free from claw marks. First, understand that scratching is a natural, necessary behavior and provide an appropriate place for your cat to scratch, that isn't your couch.

This colorful infographic, from the folks at **TheCatSite.com** explains why cats scratch, how to protect your furniture and re-direct this natural behavior to scratching posts:

<http://catingtonpost.com/infographic-problem-scratching-how-to-stop-it> for larger print

Problem Scratching And How To Stop It

Is it possible to have a cat AND nice furniture at the same house?

When cats damage the furniture, some owners get so frustrated they turn to declawing the cat or even getting rid of her. These drastic measures can be avoided. Understanding the cat's needs may help us provide good scratching alternatives.



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Why Do Cats Scratch?

Scratching objects is **natural** for all cats. They have four good reasons to scratch:

Claw Health

Cats keep their claws sharp and healthy by removing the outer sheath of the nail through scratching.



Stretching

Cats simply enjoy a good stretch when they scratch a surface. That is why many cats like to have a good scratch as part of their wake-up stretching routine.

Stress Relief

Scratching allows cats to release pent-up energy or emotional stress. Many cats will scratch when they are excited, either by their owner's arrival or by another cat's comings and goings.

Territorial marking

Did you know that cats have special glands on their paws that secrete individual scent marks? Scratching lets them mark their territory with scent and visual scratch marks.

When Scratching Becomes a Problem

Although scratching behavior is natural, it can have a devastating effect on the object used as a scratching post. Over time, the daily contact with sharp claws causes significant damage to wood or fabric. If Kitty has chosen a piece of furniture or the living room carpet as her scratching post, it can be a serious problem.

Remember: **The cat is just practicing normal feline behavior.** She is not being bad or trying to cause damage - she simply uses the best scratching post she can find.



The Solution

1. Find an acceptable scratching post.
2. Teach Kitty the furniture is out of bounds.

You can't jump straight to phase 2! You have to re-direct the behavior, and that can only be done if there's an acceptable scratching post for your cat to use!

Getting the Right Scratching Post

Cats are individuals, and different cats prefer different kinds of scratching posts. You may need to experiment with several types of scratching post until you find the one that your cat likes best.

Stability

Find a scratching post that is as stable as any heavy furniture and as immovable as wall-to-wall carpeting. Scratching puts a lot of pressure on the scratched object, and if it's not sturdy enough it will probably wobble or even topple over.

Size

When your cat scratches the post, she is also performing a full body stretch. The scratching surface should be at least 28-30 inches long. The longer, the better.

Angle

Some cats prefer vertical scratching posts while others go for horizontal or slanted ones. You may have to experiment with the various kinds until you find out what your cat likes best.

Texture

Different cats have different preferences. Sisal, rope and carpets are usually welcome. Some cats prefer cardboard or rough fabrics. Experiment to discover your cat's particular taste.

Location

Place the post in a prominent area of your house, clearly visible to your cat. Consider the situations when your cat scratches and place suitable scratching posts nearby. You may need more than one scratching post to cover all locations, especially if you live in a large house.

Scratching Post Training

Once you provide your cat with the right post for her, you need to make sure that she uses the post and avoids your furniture.



Don't try to put the cat's paws on the scratching post for her. Cats don't like to be handled this way, and you risk creating a negative association with the post.

Do Get the cat interested in the post by -



Playing interactive games around it. Make the cat chase a toy around and on the post. During the chase the cat will probably try to claw at the toy and will probably discover the pleasant surface.

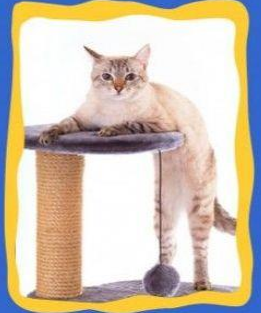


Sprinkling catnip on the scratching post. Not all cats respond to catnip, but for those that do the scent can make the new scratching surface very attractive.



Scratching the post yourself!

Use your own nails and allow the cat to watch. The scratching sound you make could tempt Kitty to come over to check out this new surface.



Whenever the cat uses the new scratching post, give plenty of praise in a pleasant quiet tone. Don't overwhelm or scare the cat by getting too excited or loud.

Be patient - this may take a few sessions, and you want your cat to be relaxed and playful.

Preventing the Cat from Scratching the Furniture

If your cat has already discovered the charms of your furniture, you need to make it less appealing. You can -

- cover the furniture with **aluminum foil**

- cover the furniture with **Sticky Paws** - a special transparent product that prevents the cat from scratching the covered surface.

- Use a special **repellant spray on your furniture**

Did we mention you can only use these preventive measures **after** you have provided your cat with an appropriate scratching post?



When Behavior Modification Doesn't Work

In the long run, it is better to take the time and follow the training program detailed above. If for some reason you cannot do this or you want a faster solution, consider using special plastic caps for your cat's claws. These caps are glued on the cat's trimmed claws and take away their destructive edge, allowing your cat to still be able to retract the claws and use them for scratching without damaging your furniture.

Why You Should Never Declaw

Declawing = amputating the cat's toes at the first knuckle.

Declawing

- Is extremely painful.
- Can lead to serious behavior problems.
- Can have significant medical complications.
- Is illegal in most Western countries.

Training your cat to use a scratching post may take a little bit of time and effort, but with so many products available to help you, there is really no need to resort to declawing.



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