

How to Encourage Appropriate Cat Scratching

Cats scratch as a normal and instinctual behavior. It helps them shed their claws, tone their muscles and leaves a familiar scent behind. First, it is important to understand the physiology of the paw and claws. A cat's paws are vital to his balance, the footpads contain scent glands and the claws are comprised of blood vessels and nerves. Healthy paws make for a healthy cat! **Declawing should never be considered when furniture is on the line. There are many alternatives to declawing.**

Why Do Cats Scratch?

- **Exercise.** Scratching is a fun way for cats to burn off some steam and calories! It's a very satisfying way for them to tone and stretch their back and shoulder muscles.
- **Play and Hunting.** Claws are an excellent device when playing with toys or hunting prey.
- **Climbing.** Cats like to be up high, whether it be a cat tree or a real one!
- **Marking Territory.** Scratching leaves visual and scent cues to other cats that this location is already claimed by another feline.
- **Defense.** Cats use their claws as their main defense and without them they resort to biting.
- **Stress Relief.** Scratching can be practiced after a cat experiences a stressful event.

What Should Cats Scratch?

First, you should observe which inappropriate items your cat is scratching. This will help you to mimic what they prefer to use.

Cats have preferences when it comes to both the direction and texture of the scratching surface. Try putting cat nip on the post when you first bring it home so your cat is more intrigued. Whatever post you buy should have a heavy, wide base so it does not fall on your cat. Otherwise he will not use it.

- **Vertical scratching** is easy to mimic with a tall cat tree or small rope scratching post.
- **Horizontal scratching** can be replicated with flat card board scratchers or angled ones.



Wooden
Scratching

Cardboard
Scratching
Post

Carpet
Scratching
Post

Sisal
Scratching
Post

Other Alternatives to Scratching Posts

If scratching posts are not for your household, here are some alternatives.

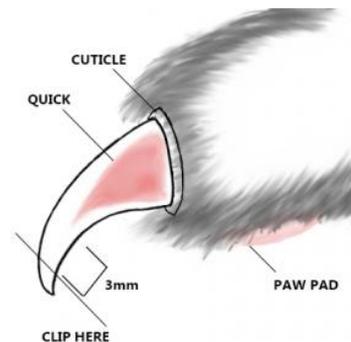
- **Foil or Double Sided Tape.** Locate the items that your cat is scratching and stick some foil or double sided tape on said item. The texture of the foil or tape will deter your cat from the furniture.
- **Soft Tips.** Soft tips or Soft Paws can be located at any local pet store and applied by any groomer. Even though Soft Tips can prevent your cat from scratching up the couch, it also limits the use of their claws. Keep in mind these do prevent your cat from being able to retract their claws, which can cause discomfort.
- **Trimming Nails.** Trimming nails regularly can help prevent scratches but also can be difficult. Make sure you bring some tasty treats for your cat for after the trimming. It is recommended that you clip their front paws every month and the back ones every other month.



Soft Paws



Sticky Paws
Double Sided
Tape



Trimming Cat
Nails

What Not to Do

- **Use Water Bottles.** Never spray you cat with a water bottle when they are doing something wrong. Using a water bottle can make your cat lose trust in you. When you are around, he will start to associate the unpleasant experience with you.
- **Do Not Scold Your Kitty.** This can also make him fearful of you and the scratching on the inappropriate surfaces will continue in your absence.

- **Do Not Declaw.** Declawing is a very inhumane practice that is being outlawed in many states and counties. Never declaw your cat to solve scratching problems. **Declawing has many negative consequences that can lead to lifelong health and behavior problems.**