

Destructive Scratching



Cats like to scratch. They scratch during play. They scratch while stretching. They scratch to mark territory or as a threatening signal other cats. And because cats' claws need regular sharpening, cats scratch on things to remove frayed, worn outer claws and expose new, sharper claws. All this scratching can cause a lot of damage to furniture, drapes and carpeting!

What to Do About Your Cat's Scratching Habits

The best tactic when dealing with scratching is not to try to stop your cat from scratching, but instead to teach her where and what to scratch. An excellent approach is to provide her with appropriate, cat-attractive surfaces and objects to scratch, such as scratching posts. The following steps will help you encourage your cat to scratch where you want her to:

- Provide a variety of scratching posts with different qualities and surfaces. Try giving your cat posts made of cardboard, carpeting, wood, sisal and upholstery. Some cats prefer horizontal posts. Others might like vertical posts or slanted posts. Some prefer a vertical grain for raking, while others favor a horizontal grain for picking. Once you figure out your cat's preference for scratching, provide additional posts of that kind in various locations. Keep in mind that all cats want a sturdy post that won't shift or collapse when used. Most cats also like a post that's tall enough that they can stretch fully. (This may be why cats seem to like drapes so much!)
- Encourage your cat to investigate her posts by scenting them with catnip, hanging toys on them and placing them in areas where she'll be inclined to climb on them.

- Discourage inappropriate scratching by removing or covering other desirable objects. Turn speakers toward the wall. Put plastic, double-sided sticky tape, sandpaper or upside-down vinyl carpet runner (knobby parts up) on furniture or on the floor where your cat would stand to scratch your furniture. Place scratching posts next to these objects, as “legal” alternatives.
- Clip your cat’s nails regularly.
- Consider putting plastic caps on your cat’s claws so that he’ll do no damage if he scratches on something in your home. These special caps attach to claws with an adhesive. They’re temporary, lasting four to six weeks.
- If you catch your cat in the act of scratching an inappropriate object, you can try startling him by clapping your hands or squirting him with water. Use this procedure only as a last resort, because your cat may associate you with the startling event (clapping or squirting) and learn to fear you.
- If you need help, don’t hesitate to call in the experts. Consult with your veterinarian or training professional.

What NOT to Do

- Do not hold your cat by the scratching post and force her to drag her claws on it. This practice could seriously frighten your cat and teach her to avoid the scratching post completely. She might decide to avoid you, too!
- Do not throw away a favorite scratching post when it becomes unsightly. Cats prefer shredded and torn objects because they can really get their claws into the material. Used posts will also appeal to your cat because they smell and look familiar to her.

Should You Declaw Your Cat?

We are strongly opposed to declawing cats, because declawing has not been proven an effective method for improving behavioral issues, including aggression towards people or other cats. It should **never** be used as a behavioral remedy or as a preventative measure.

The term “declaw” is actually a misnomer. It implies that declawing only involves the removal of a cat’s claws. In reality, declawing (or onychectomy) is the amputation of the last digital bone, including the nail bed and claw, on the front of each toe. **Cats suffer from significant pain while recovering from this procedure. The surgery introduces the cat to the risk of anesthesia, excessive bleeding and postoperative complications, including infection, and is accompanied by long lasting pain.**

A variety of alternatives exist to manage natural scratching behavior, behavioral issues and to prevent injury from cat scratches. These include having a cat’s nails

trimmed regularly in order to blunt the tips, providing scratching pads, posts and other appealing structures for the cat to use and employing behavior modification techniques to induce the cat to use them, using deterrents such as double-sided tape to protect furnishings, and covering the claws with soft temporary. Pet parents should also be familiar with cat behavior and proper handling techniques to avoid being scratched.

Information taken from ASPCA website