



Destructive Scratching

Cats like to scratch. They scratch during play. They scratch while stretching. They scratch to mark their territory or as a threatening signal to other cats. Cats' claws need regular sharpening, cats scratch on things to remove frayed, worn outer claws and expose new, sharper claws. Unfortunately, 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 them where and what to scratch. An excellent approach is to provide your cat 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 them 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, while others prefer vertical or slanted. Once you figure out your cat's preferences, provide additional posts of the same kind in various locations.
- Encourage your cat to investigate their posts by scenting them with catnip, hanging toys on them and placing them in areas where they'll be inclined to climb on them.
- Discourage inappropriate scratching by removing or covering other desirable objects. Put plastic, double-sided tape or sandpaper on furniture or on the floor where your cat would stand to scratch on your furniture.
- Clip your cat's nails regularly.
- Consider putting plastic caps on your cat's claws so that they'll do no damage if they scratch something in your home. These special caps attach to claws with an adhesive and are for temporary use.
- If you catch your cat in the act of scratching an inappropriate object, you can try startling them by clapping your hands or squirting them with water. Use this procedure as a last resort because your cat may associate you with the startling event and learn to fear you.
- If you need help, don't hesitate to call in the experts!

What NOT to do



- Do not hold your cat by the scratching post and force them to drag their claws on it. This practice could seriously frighten your cat and teach them to avoid the post entirely.
- 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.

Should you declaw your cat?

Some people declaw their cats to prevent or resolve a scratching problem. The term “declaw” is a misnomer. It implies that declawing only involves the removal of the cat’s claws. In reality, declawing involves amputating the end of the a cat’s toes. Cats suffer significant pain while recovering from declawing. An alternative surgery, a tendonectomy, severs the tendons in a cat’s toes so that they are unable to extend their nails to scratch. This procedure may or may not cause less pain. However, if you choose this method, you must clip your cat’s nails regularly because the cat is no longer able to maintain them.

The ASPCA discourages declawing and tendonectomies because of the extreme pain that these surgeries inevitably cause. Both procedures are illegal in some European countries because they’re considered cruel. We only recommend such surgeries if a cat caretaker has unsuccessfully tried everything else to resolve scratching behavior and is considering euthanasia.