

How to Stop the Cat Scratching the Furniture

Scratching is a completely normal and healthy behavior that most cats engage in, and it serves many purposes. Cats scratch to “mark” their territory by leaving behind visual markers as well as scent markers from small glands in the pads of their feet. Cats also like to dig their claws into something to get a nice, full-body stretch, especially after a long nap. Additionally, cats scratch to keep their nails in good shape and to help shed their claw sheaths.

Even though it’s normal, scratching can become troublesome to owners who are sick of having their rugs, furniture and, in some cases, walls shredded. But here are a few tips that may help.

1. REDUCE THE NEED TO SCRATCH

Since one of the reasons your cat scratches is to groom his nails, you can perform regular nail trims to keep your cat from needing to scratch. Give a feline manicure yourself or consult your veterinarian for assistance!

2. ELIMINATE THE ATTRACTION.

Usually, cats choose surfaces that feel good when they scratch. Try to make the areas your cat has selected less attractive by altering the texture of the surface. For example, try covering the area with adhesive tape, with the sticky side facing out. You can buy commercially made products to accomplish this, or do it yourself with packing or duct tape. Most cats will avoid such textures and start looking for new places to scratch.

3. GIVE YOUR CAT A PLACE TO SCRATCH.

Scratching posts and kitty furniture can be purchased at pet supply stores or can be easily constructed from twine, rope or carpet remnants. Be creative — cats like to climb, lounge and perch up high. Choose something your cat will enjoy and place it out in the open. Cats prefer to scratch in high-traffic areas, rather than in secluded, hard-to-find places. You cat has already told you where she wants to scratch. So, try placing the post right in front of where your kitty is scratching. You may want to make the new object more inviting by rubbing some catnip on it. Once the cat begins scratching on the post, try moving it one foot per day toward a more desirable location. Be sure to choose a location your cat will like. Note: The post/furniture does need to be in the room where the cat spends most of his time, which is likely where you spend most of your time. If you and he hang out in the living room, you cannot expect him to go into a guest bedroom to use a scratcher when the urge hits him.

So what makes a good scratching post?

Tall post to allow your cat the stretch

Height. The post needs to be tall enough for your cat to stretch and extend in order to get a full and satisfying scratch. The picture to the right shows a good example of a cat getting a "full and satisfying" stretch.

Stability. The post must be stable. If it wobbles, your cat won't like it, and if it topples over your cat won't want to get near it again. Watch a cat scratch — they hunker down and scratch and pull with such vigor that they need a stable surface to suit their scratching needs.

Material. The best material for cat scratching posts is sisal fabric. Not sisal rope, but sisal fabric. This woven material provides great texture for shredding — which cats love to do when scratching, and it feels good on their paws. When a cat scratches the sisal material, he can drag his claws down this satisfying material over and over in a continuous motion. In contrast, sisal rope creates an interrupted scratch — scratch, bump, scratch, bump, scratch, bump. Not very satisfying. *But sisal rope is better than carpet covering.*

4. Nail Caps

One solution is to try soft rubber caps that attach to your kitty’s nails. The colorful or clear caps attach directly to the nail, retract with the nail normally and are shed when your cat’s nails are shed. Go to your local pet supply store or online for more information on these products. Some vets will apply them for you for a small fee.