



Cats: Destructive Scratching

It's normal for cats to scratch objects in their environment for many reasons and it's unrealistic to try to prevent them from scratching.

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. You must provide objects for scratching that are appealing, attractive and convenient from your cat's point of view.

- Provide multiple types of scratching posts in multiple locations.
- Provide cat furniture- cat towers, cardboard boxes.
- 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.
- Trim your cat's nails regularly.
- Discourage inappropriate scratching by removing or covering other desirable objects. Turn speakers toward the wall. Put plastic, double-sided sticky tape, 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.
- Consider putting plastic caps on your cat's claws (Soft Claws®) so that she'll do no damage if she scratches on something in your home. These special caps attach to claws with an adhesive. They're temporary, lasting four to six weeks.

What Not to Do

- Do not hold your cat by the scratching post and force her to drag her claws on it. You could seriously frighten your cat and teach her to avoid the scratching post completely.
- 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.
- Do not punish your cat for scratching unacceptable objects. Punishment won't resolve scratching problems because it doesn't teach your cat where to scratch instead.

Should I Declaw My 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 a cat's claws. In reality, declawing involves amputating the end of 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 she's unable to extend her nails to scratch. This procedure may or may not cause less pain. However, if you choose this type of surgery, you must clip your cat's nails regularly because she'll be unable to maintain them herself.

The BAHS and 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 to animals. We only recommend such surgeries if a cat caretaker has unsuccessfully tried everything else to resolve scratching behavior and is considering euthanasia.