

# Why Cats Scratch and What to Do About It



## Reasons cats scratch



### Scratching keeps claws in shape

In the wild, cats need sharp claws in order to climb, hunt and protect themselves, so scratching is a hardwired behavior.

### Scratching is a way for cats to mark territory

Through scratching, cats leave visual signs and release a scent from the glands in their paws.



### Scratching shows joy and happiness

Cats scratch to stretch and to show excitement. They do it when they wake up and when their human comes home from work.



## How to prevent scratching

1

### Provide attractive scratching surfaces throughout your home

Scratching is a natural behavior, so don't punish your cat but direct it to specific objects such as scratching posts.



2

### Try different scratching-post materials and designs

The material needs to make a good sound, allow the cat to sink its claws into it and help trim the cat's nails. Some cats prefer horizontal cardboard scratchers and others vertical sisal posts. Horizontal scratchers are great for older cats and those with disabilities while vertical scratchers provide a better stretch.



3

### Pick the location of the scratching post carefully

If your cat's inappropriate scratching is targeting an object, put the new scratching alternative within 5 feet of that object. Place a scratching post in an area of your home that your cat enjoys.



## What to do if your cat scratches the furniture



1

### Make the area unpleasant and the target unappealing

Cover the object with a material that's annoying for your cat: double-sided tape, aluminum foil or heavy plastic sheets. At the same time, offer an appealing scratching surface like a cat tree nearby. This way, when the cat comes over to scratch the forbidden object, it will see that it's not appealing and notice the better option.

2

### Trim your cat's nails

First, get your pet used to having its paws squeezed. You can do this by petting the paws while giving a treat. With time, practice applying a small amount of pressure to the paw until a claw gets extended. Cut only the claw's tip! Don't cut into the pink portion of the nail because it will bleed and cause pain to your pet. Use nail trimmers designed for cats.

3

### Increase play time and offer cat furniture to fight inappropriate scratching

Cats scratch for many reasons and one of them is to work off excess energy. This means that you could stop inappropriate scratching by playing with your pet. Activities that stimulate a cat's natural hunting instincts are the best. If you have the space, set up a cat gym or wall shelves that will encourage your pet to jump from place to place.