Scratching, How to Stop

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Does your cat love to scratch? For many cat owners, this instinctive behavior tatters the furniture, shreds the drapes, and claws at their sanity. But why does your cat scratch and, more importantly, how can you help curb this behavior and protect your home?

WHY CATS SCRATCH

Scratching is an instinctive behavior beneficial to your cat's physical and emotional well-being. Cats scratch to shed the outer layers of their claws, mark their scent, get attention, and stretch and condition paw muscles. It is such an ingrained behavior, in fact, that even de-clawed cats will go through the scratching motions.

RE-DIRECT SCRATCHING BEHAVIOR

Since it is such a powerful instinct, scratching is nearly impossible to stop completely. Instead, try to re-direct this behavior to more suitable objects. Doing so still allows your cat to satisfy his instincts without harming your home's décor. To help re-direct your cat's behavior:

- Remove scent markers - use cleaners that help eliminate territorial marking scents left behind by the sweat glands on your cat's paws during his last scratching session with your furniture or drapes. Cats use these scent marks to establish territory and will frequently return to these locations to replenish the scent. After you've cleaned the area, use sprays or surface barriers to help deter your cat from that area.
- Offer cat scratchers - wood scratch posts, corrugated cardboard surfaces, or sisal toys all make great scratching alternatives. Try different scratching materials to determine which type your cat prefers. Catnip sprayed or sprinkled onto scratcher surfaces may also entice use. Also, keep scratchers convenient to your cat's favorite resting spot, since most cats frequently scratch immediately after waking.
- Reinforce positive behavior - suitable cat treats reward your cat for using his new scratch post instead of your furniture. Keep in mind, however, that re-directing your cat's scratching may take time.

Products We Recommend		
Drs. Foster and Smith OdorLogic® CleanAway	No-Scratch! Spray	Drs. Foster and Smith Swiss Mountain Cat Scratcher

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