

Stop Scratching!

Why Cats Scratch:

Scratching is an instinctive behavior for cats. When a cat scratches furniture, it is commonly thought to be sharpening its claws. Not so. Claws grow in layers and scratching is necessary to remove the old, flaky, beat-up top layer (husk) of the claw material to reveal the new, smooth claw underneath. Cats also have scent glands on their feet, and when they scratch, their scent remains on that surface, effectively “marking” their territory. Additionally, scratching provides exercise. Even declawed cats benefit from scratching posts.

Scratching Posts:

A scratching post is often the best way to meet your cat’s inherent need to scratch, without sacrificing your furniture or drapes. Most cats prefer a rough-touch post covering, such as sisal rope, although cardboard and carpet posts and furniture can also do the trick.

To train a cat to use a scratching post, three cardinal rules must be observed. If pet owners follow them consistently, they should have minimal trouble weaning their cat from scratching their furniture to using its own. If your cat does not take to a scratching post, *Soft Claws* are a safe, and effective alternative to declawing. These plastic caps are adhered to the cat’s nails preventing destructive scratching. When the cat sheds the top layer of nail, the cap will go with it (typically every 6-8 weeks).

1. Never punish or frighten a cat while it is on its post or tree. This is your cat’s place, and if it has a bad experience while there, the chances of getting the cat to use the post again may be slim to none.
2. If the cat is caught scratching the furniture, drapes or carpet, sternly say “no” and place the cat on its post. Generously praise the cat when it uses the post.
3. Be patient. A cat may need some time to get used to the idea and it may need encouragement. You can show it how to use the post by placing its front paws against the post and moving them up and down, or by scratching the post yourself. The noise will attract the cat’s attention, and it should soon mimic your actions. If the cat seems to need further encouragement, rub the post with catnip (especially if the manufacturer has not treated the post). If you still have trouble getting the cat to use the post, rub the post with a piece of your clothing or bedding. Your smell will often attract your cat to the chosen spot or item. (Remember, some cats need time to adjust to new items or changes to your home, like a new scratching post.

