



Marmalade was scratching the new rug. Rachel bought her a scratching post, but Marmalade refused to use it. A friend pointed out that Marmalade seemed to like scratching objects lying on the floor. Rachel covered a piece of plywood with carpet, sprayed it with some catnip, and within days Rachel had no more worries about the rug.

Programs and services provided by the Ottawa Humane Society are made possible thanks to your financial support.

Please support the animals in our community.



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SHOULD I DECLAW MY CAT?

Declawing amputates the end digit and claw of a cat's paw — similar in scope to cutting off a person's finger at the last joint. This procedure can cause substantial discomfort and complications after the operation. Declawed cats may become reclusive, irritable, aggressive and unpredictable, and may have a tendency to bite as they cannot scratch to give warning.

While other, newer methods exist for declawing (for example, laser surgery), the end result is still undesirable for your cat as it prevents her from engaging in normal cat behaviour. The OHS does not support declawing. It should be considered as a final option after you have exhausted other alternatives to eliminate destructive behaviour. However, if you feel that you must either declaw your cat or give her up, the OHS would rather see your cat stay in her home. If you decide that it is absolutely necessary to have your cat declawed, only have the front paws done, so that the cat can still scratch an itch, climb and defend herself. If this is your decision, consult your veterinarian first and discuss having the surgery done at the same time your cat is spayed or neutered.



WHAT IF I MUST GIVE UP MY PET?

Giving up an animal is never easy for the owner or the pet. Sometimes, despite your best efforts, your pet will simply not adjust. Consult your veterinarian to discuss new strategies. If that doesn't work, and you feel your pet will not be able to live with you, make sure the solution to your problem doesn't create a bigger one for your pet. Try to find a caring and responsible new home, or surrender your pet to the Ottawa Humane Society. We will do our best to find your former companion the happy, healthy home he deserves.

Declawing a cat doesn't remove just the claws — it amputates the end digit from the paw.

DESTRUCTIVE SCRATCHING IN CATS

Scratching is normal cat behaviour, but you have lots of ways to keep your feline friend from ruining the furniture!





WHY DO CATS SCRATCH?

Scratching is normal cat behaviour, not a comment on your upholstery. Cats scratch in order to:

- Remove the dead outer layer of their claws.
- Rub their scent onto things to mark their territory.
- Stretch their bodies and claws.
- Work off energy.
- Seek your attention when they want something.

HOW CAN I STOP MY CAT FROM SCRATCHING?

You can't. Scratching is normal behaviour for your cat; it becomes a problem only when the object being scratched is an item of value to you. The goal is to redirect the scratching to an acceptable object, such as a scratching post.

Don't try to stop the cat from scratching — try to redirect it.

HOW CAN I TRAIN MY CAT TO SCRATCH ACCEPTABLE OBJECTS?

- Provide objects for scratching that are appealing and convenient from your cat's point of view. Observe the physical features of the objects your cat is scratching. Note their location, texture, shape and height.
- Substitute a similar object(s) for her to scratch (for example, rope-wrapped posts, corrugated cardboard, or even a log). Place an acceptable object (for example, scratching post) near an inappropriate object (for example, upholstered chair). Make sure the objects are stable and won't fall over when she uses them. You can make these objects more attractive to your cat by spraying them with catnip periodically and hanging a toy from the post.
- Cover the inappropriate object(s) with something your cat won't like, such as double-sided sticky tape, aluminium foil, sheets of sandpaper, or a plastic carpet runner with the pointy side up. Special products for training your cat are available at pet supply stores.
- Don't take your cat over to the scratching post and position her paws on the post to show her what she's supposed to do. This will likely have the opposite effect and make her less likely to use the post.
- Only remove the "unappealing" coverings (for example, double-sided sticky tape, aluminium foil, sheets of sandpaper) from the inappropriate object(s) when your cat is consistently using the appropriate objects. This will entice your cat to investigate the more appealing scratching post.

WHERE CAN I FIND A SCRATCHING POST?

Most pet supply stores carry scratching posts in a range of styles and costs. Be sure that whatever you purchase is stable and won't topple when used; a minimum of three feet tall is recommended. You can also construct your own scratching post. Again, make sure your design is stable. If you have access to the Internet, a web search will lead you to resources on building a scratching post.



ARE OTHER PRODUCTS AVAILABLE TO HELP STOP INAPPROPRIATE SCRATCHING?

Many products are specifically designed to help stop inappropriate scratching, including sheets of adhesive material to stick to furniture and glue-on nail caps for your cat. Consult with your veterinarian, or conduct a search on the Internet, to find the most current products.

SHOULD I PUNISH MY CAT FOR SCRATCHING?

Punishment is effective only if you catch your cat in the act of scratching unacceptable objects and have provided her with acceptable scratching objects. Punishment after the fact won't change the behaviour. If you do catch your cat in the act, try making a loud noise (for example, use a whistle, shake a soda can filled with pebbles or slap the wall or a table) or use a water-filled squirt bottle. Conversely, when your cat claws the scratching post instead of your couch, praise him.

CAN TRIMMING MY CAT'S CLAWS HELP?

One reason cats scratch is to remove the dead outer layer of their claws. Regularly trimming your cat's nails can help reduce scratching.

HOW DO I TRIM MY CAT'S CLAWS?

You should clip off the sharp tips of your cat's claws on his front feet every two weeks or so. Help him get accustomed to having his paws handled and squeezed by gently petting his legs and paws while offering a treat until he tolerates this kind of touching and restraint.

Apply a small amount of pressure to her paw — with your thumb on top of the paw and your index finger underneath — until a claw is extended. You should be able to see the pink or "quick," which is a small blood vessel. Don't cut into this pink portion, as it will bleed and be painful for your cat. If you cut off just the sharp tip of the claw, or "hook," it will dull the claw.

There are several types of claw trimmers designed especially for pets. These are better than your own nail clipper because they won't crush the claw. Until you and your cat have become accustomed to the routine, one claw or one foot a day is enough of a challenge.

