

YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND: HOW TO DEAL WITH YOUR CAT'S CLAWS

Cats love to scratch! They scratch during play, while stretching, to mark territory, or for any other reason your cat might think of! Cat claws also require sharpening, because they are constantly growing. Unfortunately, sometimes your cat might try scratching something you don't want her to. Read below to learn how to deal with her claws in a humane way.

It is best and easiest to teach her where it's appropriate to scratch, rather than punishing her from scratching certain things.

- Provide a variety of scratching materials and posts with different materials and orientations. Cats typically have preferences and you'll benefit from figuring out what they are. Some cats prefer horizontal posts or cardboard scratchers, while others prefer scratchers they hang from a door handle or stand upright. Some prefer carpet, while others prefer sisal, rope, or cardboard. Most cats want something that is big enough for them to stretch on while scratching and prefer something that feels stable and won't move under their weight.
- Try scenting her posts with catnip, hanging her favorite toys on them, or placing them in areas where she likes to spend time.
- Clip her nails regularly. As nails grow out, they can be uncomfortable and your cat will want to "shed" the old nail, meaning they'll scratch more. Kittens need their nails clipped as frequently as every four or five days. Older cats need their front nails clipped every few weeks and their back nails slightly less frequently.
- Consider putting plastic caps on her nails. These stay on with adhesive and last about six weeks before needing to be replaced with new ones.
- Remove or cover objects that are off-limits to your cat. Try placing double-sided tape, aluminum foil, or sandpaper on surfaces that you don't want her to scratch. Place scratching posts near these objects so she knows there's an alternative.
- If you catch your cat in the act, you can try startling her by clapping or otherwise making noise, but be careful not to scare her or punish her. This should really be a last resort and used sparingly to prevent behavior issues.

DO NOT:

- Don't hold your cat by the scratching post and try to force her to scratch. This could scare her, resulting in her avoiding the scratching post or even avoiding you!
- Don't throw away used scratching posts if your cat still uses it. Cats like the roughed up material best as they can really dig into it. They also prefer used posts because they are familiar.

Is declawing really that bad?

Declawing (onychectomy) is the amputation of the last digital bone, including the nail bed and claw, from the front of each toe. Declawed cats are at higher risk of serious behavioral and health issues later in life. It is an excruciating recovery and a high risk of infection. It should only be considered as a last resort if the behavioral and environmental alternatives have been exhausted and the cat faces euthanasia. There are plenty of alternative corrective methods to try (like those listed above!) before resorting to declawing.

