



Cats and Scratching

When cats scratch, they drag their claws across either a vertical or horizontal surface. This is a natural behaviour and is done for a few reasons:

- It sharpens the claws by removing the outer husk of the claw.
- It can be used as a form of communication for other cats. Scratching releases a scent from glands between the pads of the feet and the claw husks that are left behind can be seen and smelt by other cats. Scratched patches are often in areas around territory boundaries such as trees, fence posts and gates.
- It helps to keep cats fit and strong by exercising lots of muscles; this is especially the case when cats pull themselves along by their claws.

Mostly this behaviour is performed outside, but sometimes these behaviours creep indoors. This could be purely because your cat is an indoor cat, or that they feel happier inside, but it can also be a tool for getting attention from an owner, exerting their territorial prowess, or if your cat is stressed, for example if a new cat moves into the area.

When is scratching a problem?

Some degree of scratching is totally normal for a cat, and it is a natural behaviour which shouldn't be restricted. Making sure that there are scratching posts or 'scratch friendly' areas can help to direct your cat away from furniture and carpets. However, if scratching is becoming excessive it could be a sign of stress or insecurity in your cat. In such cases, it is important to assess your cat's general demeanour, the pattern of scratching and the environment, in order to address potential causes of the behaviour.

How do I prevent my cat scratching?

- Install a cat scratching post, specific cat scratching wallpaper or attach a section of carpet to the wall.
- Make sure the object for scratching is reachable but high enough to allow the cat to fully stretch.
- Cats like to scratch after waking up so putting the post near a favourite bed can help
- Make sure the scratching object is strong enough or heavy enough to allow a full-strength scratch.
- Make sure you have a scratching post or object for each cat in a multi-cat household and then one spare for choice.
- Consider using [Feliway®](#) (manufactured by Ceva Animal Health), to reduce stress and increase a sense of wellbeing and security. This reduces the likelihood of scratching for territorial reasons.

If your cat goes outdoors, please do not trim their nails as they need them to climb or get away from danger in a hurry.



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Remember, scratching is a natural behaviour, not a naughty behaviour. It is important not to punish your cat for scratching, but rather redirect the behaviour or address causes of stress. Punishment can even make the situation worse as it increases anxiety.