

12 Steps to Stop Strange Chewing Behaviors

Learn how to redirect or discourage your cat's unusual chewing habits.

Marty Becker, DVM, and Mikkel Becker

6. Stick with what Kitty prefers. Its been said that nobody likes change except a 4-month-old baby with a wet diaper. Your cat is at the top of that list. Cats relish predictability and prefer things -- household members, furniture, litterbox, brand of food, etc. -- to stay the same.
7. Stop rewarding behaviors you don't want repeated. Ilona Rodan, DVM, of Cat Care Clinic in Madison, Wis., says that many of her clients unknowingly reinforce their cats chewing on inappropriate materials by giving them attention. For some cats, even negative attention is better than no attention. Reward the positive by giving your cat food treats, praise, massage, grooming, anything it likes.
8. The switcheroo. Redirect the inappropriate behavior. For example, when Kitty reaches for rubber or tries to get wooly from wool, substitute a treat or playtime. Your cat will soon learn that group-fun is better than alone time with its comforter.
9. Yuck! Although cats don't chew fabric, plastic or wood for the taste, they may stop sticking them in their mouths if they taste yucky. Try spritzing the offending materials with a cat-safe repellent or bitter substance such as rubbing alcohol.
10. Keep off. If your cat won't stay from a taboo object or area, you can use motion alarms or put the offending object on top of newspaper that covers a partially sprung mousetrap. When the cat attempts to reach the object, the trap snaps under the paper, and turns them into a scaredy cat.
11. Bad scents make sense. Most pets dislike the smell of perfume so mix one part cologne with 10 parts water and spray it where you don't want your cat to linger. The cheaper and worse-smelling the better, so look on the bottom shelf of the drug store for something with rocket-fuel smell and potency.
12. Drugs. If all else fails or your veterinarian diagnoses your cat with a compulsive disorder, some antidepressant drugs may help.

- More Behavior Tips -