

12 Steps to Stop Strange Chewing Behaviors

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

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Some cats have the strangest oral fixations. Do you ever find your feline friend chewing or sucking on wool, cotton or other fabrics? Perhaps your cat favors the feel of plastic in its mouth. Chewing disorders can result in some serious medical complications (i.e., your cat ingests something), so nip any weird habits in the bud the minute you notice them. Here are 12 expert tips to curb a chewing disorder.

1. Feed the need. If your cat craves crunch, remove the wool or plastic pacifier and offer it dry food, lettuce or whole baby carrots. Or, provide alternative oral stimulation in the form of rawhide soaked in chicken broth or other dog chew treats. Check with your veterinarian for safe suggestions.
2. Green grocer. Create a cat-tractive window box filled with catnip, wheat grass and other items designed to lure your mischievous-muncher away from the offending items.
3. Zoom around the room. Bored cats are destructive cats. Cat owners often forget that their cats evolved as turbo-charged hunters who climbed, crept, leapt and raced in pursuit of fast food. Use cat activity centers and interactive toys to engage Kittys mind and body. Spruce up old toys by applying a little meat spread, cheese or tuna juice to whet your cats appetite for some good clean fun.
4. A hunting we will go. Make eating seem more natural by hiding small amounts of food in a variety of locations that require your cat to search for the food. This way, mealtime becomes a more anticipated and enjoyable part of Kittys day.
5. Don't eat and run. Marsha Reich, DVM, a board-certified veterinary behaviorist in Silverspring, Md., recommends using food-dispensing toys, which require some finagling to get the food out. Reich says that some cats prefer canned food because it is more mouse-like.

If feeding canned food, freeze ice cube-size amounts. This controls portions and as the food thaws, it gives your cat time to ingest and process the food.