

King of the Countertops

With gentle discouragement, you can teach your cat to stay off counters and tables. Follow these tips to keep your cat on the ground.

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One of the most common complaints cat owners have is cats that climb on kitchen counters. Cats climb on counters, tables, shelves and windowsills for a variety of reasons. A cat may be seeking food or the company of human companions. Many cat owners tell us their cats sit or lie right in front of them when they sit down to eat, talk on the phone or work at a desk. Such behavior is a sign of affection, not a ploy by the cat to frustrate you. Cats may also climb shelves and tables to play with small objects, to avoid people, other cats or dogs, to see out a window or just to sleep in a warmer place.

Cats climbing for food or play objects can be discouraged by removing those items from counters, tables and shelves. For a cat wanting attention, place the cat on your lap or next to you on the chair and pet it only as long as it stays in this position. If your cat is climbing to avoid people or other animals or just to get a good view of the house, consider giving the cat its own shelf or climbing tree. Consider blocking the view from windows with paper or aluminum foil for cats that are sitting in windows you want to keep off-limits.

If all else fails and you absolutely have to keep the cat off a surface, consider closing the door to keep it out of the room. Where this is not possible, make the surface undesirable. Possible deterrents include vinyl carpet runners with the pointed side up, double-sided sticky tape or a mat that delivers a small static shock. Loud noises, such as party noisemakers or a tin can filled with coins, may also be effective.

Squirting the cat with water when you catch it on a forbidden surface may seem to work but will only keep the cat down when you are around. Aversive techniques must be done consistently to be effective. Remember, to modify climbing behavior, you must take away the motivation for the climbing and provide acceptable alternatives, such as a cat tree.