

## Help for a Shocking Problem

**Keep cords out of kitty's reach to help curb her penchant for chewing them.**

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Q. My cat, Jane, has chewed through every one of my electrical cords. She has chewed through my Internet cord, my television cord and my vacuum cord. I brush her teeth, she eats soft and hard food and has a chew toy that she occasionally uses instead of electrical cords, but I'm still finding chewed electrical cords. My other concern is that she will electrocute herself. How can I stop her before she uses up her nine lives?

A. It sounds like Jane has a penchant for a shocking habit! She is obviously not doing this because she thinks that it will improve her oral health, rather it is something fun. Such chewing is common with rabbits, as they simply love to chew cords. In either case, the recommendations are the same: Avoidance is the best, and then working to counter condition the pet is also helpful. Suggestions for avoidance include placing all cords out of reach up over doors, windows, and covering the cords where they are in reach and where they plug into the wall. Many people use PVC pipe or plastic shower rod covers for color coordination to hide and camouflage all electrical cords.

Behavioral modification can include giving your cat allowable cord-like toys to play with, however, be sure to praise them for playing with her new toys instead of fatal cords. Also, rubbing catnip on the good toys and a bitter-citrus deterrent on the bad cords may help. Be sure to rotate toys frequently and give your kitty other toys such as boxes, paper bags with no handles, tunnels and other chew toys to keep her busy.

In rare circumstances pharmacological intervention (generally for obsessive-compulsive disorder) may be needed, but the services of a board-certified behaviorist is recommended before beginning any form of drug therapy.