

## My Cat Is Scratching the Couch

**CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, gives suggestions for helping kitty kick the habit.**

*By Jeanne Adlon*

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**Q:** How can I keep my cat from scratching my couch?

**A:** Aside from litterbox problems, this is the question I get asked the most, so I always make room for it in this column. Scratching is a natural part of a cat's life but some take it to extremes. I remember Milly, one of my house calls, scratched a hole in her owner's boxspring big enough to crawl into and take a snooze. Fortunately, they told me about her special spot before I came in to care for her — never in a million years would I have thought to look for her there and I've seen some pretty exotic hiding places.

My best response to scratching problems is to try to train your cat to use a scratching post — with patience many owners are successful. Scratching is a good way for cats to relieve stress and stretch their muscles, especially after a nap. So make sure your scratching post is tall enough for your kitty to reach up for a good stretch. The material around the post should be a tight weave like commercial carpeting (not shag) or sisal. Put catnip and a favorite toy on the post, and place it near the furniture that your cat is currently scratching — you can gradually move it away once your kitty starts to use the post.

It may sound silly but in the beginning bring her to the post several times a day and hold her paws up to it, imitating a scratching motion. I remember doing that to a cat who, I swear was looking at me like I was nuts, but she started using the post! Always praise and pet your cat when she uses her post and give her a treat. Meanwhile, keep a plant mister nearby to give a small spritz if she heads for the furniture. Hint: If possible, don't let her see it's you doing the spritzing — she may be less likely to scratch the furniture while you are away, if you are not associated with the mister.

There are many pet products available that claim to be repellants, but check with your vet first. I have had luck putting double-sided tape on areas of furniture I don't want scratched. Keep your cat's nails short and again, be patient. As always, I welcome your comments and stories.