

My Cat Is Scratching the Furniture

Cat Channel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, discusses some cat-friendly fabric choices.

By Jeanne Adlon

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Q: I cannot stop my cat from scratching my furniture. Are there fabrics for my couches and chairs that are cat-friendly?

A: Unfortunately, as much as we want our kitties to use their scratching posts and not our furniture, we cannot always convince them it's a good idea. I remember a bright orange-and-white cat named Reggie I used to cat sit, who was as gentle as a lamb and very friendly.

Reggie's owners were well-off and lived in a beautiful Manhattan apartment on Park Avenue which was filled with expensive furniture. They adored Reggie and the first time I visited the apartment to care for him, I couldn't help but laugh. He had chosen one chair out of a very pricey dining-room set as his personal scratching post. Here it sat completely shredded, with all the stuffing torn out of it and surrounded by the rest of the gorgeous and untouched chairs in the set. When I asked his owners about it, they told me that they would rather have Reggie destroy one chair than scratch his way through the apartment, so they never scolded him for working on "his" chair.

Not all of us can count on our cats behaving like Reggie, and if they do, you might want to try chairs with wooden arms. Meanwhile, I have found that denim fabric, which comes in all colors, is pretty rugged and cats do not seem to be attracted to it or Ultrasuede fabric. Sometimes, our kitties cannot avoid having accidents like hairballs on our furniture, so I find washable slipcovers a good choice, as well as "pleather" or Naugahyde. It also never hurts to put a scratching post next to furniture they are targeting.

If your cat is urinating on a rug or mat, check the backing. It is my opinion that rugs and mats with rubber backing emit an odor when washed, which seems to entice some cats to urinate on them. I suggest replacing them with ones that do not have rubber backings. As in all ways we share our lives with our feline friends, a little give and take usually does the trick.