

## My Cat Gets in a Scratching-Post Frenzy

**CatChannel behavior expert Marilyn Krieger discusses a cat's need to scratch and why it is healthy behavior.**

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Posted: Aug. 14, 2009, 3 a.m. EDT

**Q:** One of my cats appears to have an obsessive-compulsive behavior. Whenever I enter a room, she runs to one of the scratching posts and scratches and scratches. One of my rooms has several posts and cat trees with scratching areas. If I bring a wand toy to play with her, she'll run from post to post. Is she afraid I'm going to clip her claws? How do I stop this compulsive behavior without removing all the scratching posts?

**A:** Based on your post, when your cat is in her super-scratching frenzy, she isn't displaying obsessive-compulsive behavior and she's not worried about claw clipping. Instead, it sounds like she's thrilled that her favorite person is visiting her. After all, you are the person who provides her with all the fun things in life: food, play, affection, treats and everything else a cat could want.

Some cats will scratch surfaces when their favorite people come into the room. One of my cats always scratches his posts when he sees me. He runs from post to post scratching excitedly, dispelling energy. I also reinforce him with words of encouragement and strokes. It's better for him to scratch the scratching posts than the rug or sofa.

In addition to giving themselves manicures, cats scratch for many reasons: They scratch to disperse energy and to stretch. Cats also scratch to mark territory. They have scent glands on the bottom of their paws. Every time they scratch, they leave a little bit of information about themselves. Additionally, some cats scratch for attention from their people.

Don't discourage your cat from scratching. Cats have to scratch and if you take away the scratching posts she will probably scratch your furniture. Instead, reinforce your cat for scratching the posts and the cat trees. In addition to the posts you already have, consider buying more posts and horizontal scratchers and placing them in other parts of your house. There are many readers who envy your position. Their cats scratch the furniture and don't use the posts and horizontal scratchers.

I wouldn't worry about your cat's behavior. You may want to consider having more scheduled quality time every day with her though. Most cats love hanging out with their favorite people and interacting with them. Playing with your cat, using a wand or fishing pole toy a couple of times a day will help disperse some of her energy.