

Scratching the Furniture

Find out what a vet recommends for inappropriate scratching.

Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, D.V.M.

Q. How do I prevent my cat from scratching furniture?

Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, D.V.M., says: Scratching is a normal behavior for a cat. Scratching keeps a cats nails in shape and leaves her scent on the area she scratches. Some cats prefer to scratch carpet, while others prefer sisal (high fiber twine). Some like vertical posts and others horizontal corrugated cardboard. Unless you train your cat, she will not know the difference between a scratching post and a sofa or carpet.

To train your cat to use a scratching post, make it part of her morning routine, even before feeding, by encouraging her over to the post by dangling a toy. Cats follow habitual patterns of behavior, and this should establish a routine. If you have a kitten, introduce her to scratching posts early on. If your cat has already started scratching an off-limits item, you need to break the habit as soon as possible. Squirting her with water, covering the item with a plastic drop cloth, or applying double sided tape to the item are some options. Another option that works with some cats is repellent spray; many cats stop scratching items that have been sprayed with Feliway, a spray that is a chemical copy of feline facial pheromones.

Also, try placing a scratching post next to the item you don't want scratched and move the cat over to it when the cat is scratching the wrong item or during play. Once the cat has started using the post, move it to a more desirable location a few feet at a time over the course of a week.

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