

scratching object as close to the cat's preferred scratching location as possible.

Do not move the unappealing coverings or odors until the cat is consistently using the appropriate objects in their permanent location for several weeks. They should be removed gradually, not all at once.

Should I punish my cat for scratching?

Punishment can be used only if the cat is **CAUGHT IN THE ACT** scratching unacceptable objects. If used by itself, however, punishment is not going to be effective in resolving scratching problems because it does not teach the cat where to scratch.

If you do catch your cat scratching inappropriate objects, remote punishment is best, in which you do not directly interact with the cat. Use a whistle, slap the wall, shake a can filled with rocks, squirt a bottle with water, or throw a pillow at the cat.

NEVER PUNISH YOUR CAT IF YOU DO NOT CATCH HIM SCRATCHING. Punishment after the fact will not change the behavior, but may cause your cat to be afraid of you or the environment and may cause defensive aggression.

Trim your cat's nails every one to two weeks being careful to trim only the tip and not cut into the pink "quick."

Source: Suzanne Hetts PhD and Kathy Macklem for the Denver Dumb Friends League



Escondido Humane Society
3450 E. Valley Parkway
Escondido, CA 92027
www.escondidohumanesociety.org

Escondido Humane Society

Why do cats scratch?

Preventing destructive behavior



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Adoption Center is open from
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week.

Why do cat's scratch?

Scratching is a NORMAL behavior. It is used because:

- It removes the dead outer layer of the claws.
- It is a way of marking territory by leaving both a visual mark and an odor scent. (Cats have scent glands in their paws.)
- It is a way of stretching the body and flexing the feet and claws.
- It is used during play.

How can I train my cat to scratch acceptable objects?

Because scratching is a normal behavior, and one which cats are highly motivated to display, it is unrealistic for owners to try to prevent their cats from scratching. Instead, the goal is to redirect the scratching onto acceptable objects.

Provide objects for scratching that are appealing and attractive from a cat's point of view. If your cat is scratching objects, observe the physical features of these items:

- Where are they located? (Prominent objects, objects close to sleeping areas, and areas near the entrance to a room are often chosen.)
- What texture do they have? (soft, coarse?)
- Are the horizontal or vertical objects?
- How tall are they? (At what height does the cat scratch?)
- The answers to these question will help you to understand your cat's scratching preferences.

Substitute similar but acceptable objects for the cat to scratch.

- Sisal rope post
- Corrugated cardboard
- A log

- Carpeted post

Place these objects near the inappropriate objects the cat is already using. Make sure the post is stable and won't fall over or move around when the cat uses it. Catnip can be put on these appropriate items.

Cover the inappropriate objects with something the cat will not find appealing, such as double-sided sticky sheets, aluminum foil, sheets of sand paper or plastic carpet runner with the pointy side up.

Scent also can be used to repel a cat from a place of destruction. You can use a cotton ball with perfume muscle rub citrus scent. Care must be taken not to place scent repellent near a cat post that you want the cat to use.

When a cat is consistently using the appropriate object, it can be moved VERY GRADUALLY (about one inch per day) to a location more suitable to the owner. It is best to keep the appropriate