



## Prevent Cats from Scratching Undesirable Areas

- Scratching is normal cat behavior, serving to groom the front claws and leave markers of the cat's presence. Cats may also scratch to stretch their muscles.
- Proper training to scratch on appropriate surfaces, combined with nail care, can prevent damage in the home. Provide objects for scratching that are appealing, attractive and convenient.
- **There are 3 things to consider when selecting and placing a scratching post: height, material and location.**
  - **Height**—Posts should be the proper height for your cat to scratch fully. Some cats will accept shorter posts, but most prefer posts that are at least 2.5 to 3.5 feet tall (30-42 inches). Many cats prefer a vertical scratching post, but some prefer horizontal ones. Vertical posts must be sturdy so the cat doesn't push the post over.
  - **Material**—Use an appropriate texture. Some cats prefer sisal ropes, some cardboard, some wood and some loop carpets. Straight carpet normally isn't a preferred scratching surface for most cats.
  - **Location**—Place the post in an appropriate area of the house—not in the back of the laundry room or closet. If the cat is scratching a particular piece of furniture or carpet, place the post next to that furniture or over that piece of carpet and slowly move it (about 3 inches per day) to the desired location.
- Entice your cat to use the post by rubbing catnip on the post and holding treats or toys partway up the post to encourage stretching and scratching. You can secure an appealing toy, such as feathers, at the top of the post. **Rewards can be given at each step**—as the cat approaches the post, touches it and finally scratches it. **Never yell at or punish the cat.**
- **Place double-sided sticky tape or aluminum foil on inappropriate areas.** Cats don't like the feel of these materials on their feet and this helps direct the cat to the post. **Spray bottles with water and cans of pennies or nails** can be used to help redirect inappropriate scratching behavior. If necessary, the cat can be confined to an area where the post is the only available scratching outlet. This establishes use of the scratching post and prevents inadvertent reinforcement for scratching off-limits household items.

**Trim the tips of the nails every one or two weeks or as needed.** If done correctly and introduced early, this procedure is accepted by most cats. Introduce nail trimmings as part of routine handling of kittens.