



**OPERATION
KINDNESS**

Destructive Scratching

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Cats that use your furniture or curtains to sharpen their claws can cause costly damage. Cats have a need to scratch so it is important to teach them where it is okay for them to scratch.

Cats scratch to shed the outer layers of their nails but they also scratch to stretch their muscles and to scent mark. Scent marking allows cats to feel comfortable and get that “home” like feeling. When cats stretch they extend each one of the joints in their toes and their legs but they also stretch the muscles in their back.

Trimming your cat’s nails often, every week to two weeks, will keep the nails in good condition reducing the amount of damage the cat will cause by scratching. Start by teaching your cat early on about nail trims. Use treats or catnip to keep your cat busy while you trim their nails. This will help to make the chore easier for them and you too. If you have trouble trimming your cat’s nails, talk to your veterinarian or a cat groomer to get some helpful hints.

If your cat has found a place that they like to scratch you can place a scratching post near that area as an alternative. If you already have scratching posts in your house that your cat doesn’t use then move them to the places that your cat does scratch. Some cats like to scratch vertically while others enjoy a good horizontal scratch. Cats that scratch in both ways will need scratching pads and posts that are both horizontal and vertical. When teaching a cat where to scratch you might use a product called Feliscratch which is specially formulated to mimic the pheromones that cats leave behind after they have scratched something. It has been scientifically proven to increase the likelihood that the cat will scratch in the area that it is placed on.

Soft Claws or Kitty Caps are rubber nail covers that can be applied to your cat’s nails with temporary glue. These types of products are usually available at pet retailers and online. This is a great alternative that still allows the cat to scratch and stretch without causing any damage to your belongings. Ask your veterinarian or groomer how to apply them.

If you are still having trouble with your cat’s destructive scratching behavior you may want to contact a cat behavior specialist or trainer to help you work through this issue. Operation Kindness strongly discourages declawing cats.

For behavior and training advice, please contact Operation Kindness at behavior@operationkindness.org or visit www.operationkindness.org/training.