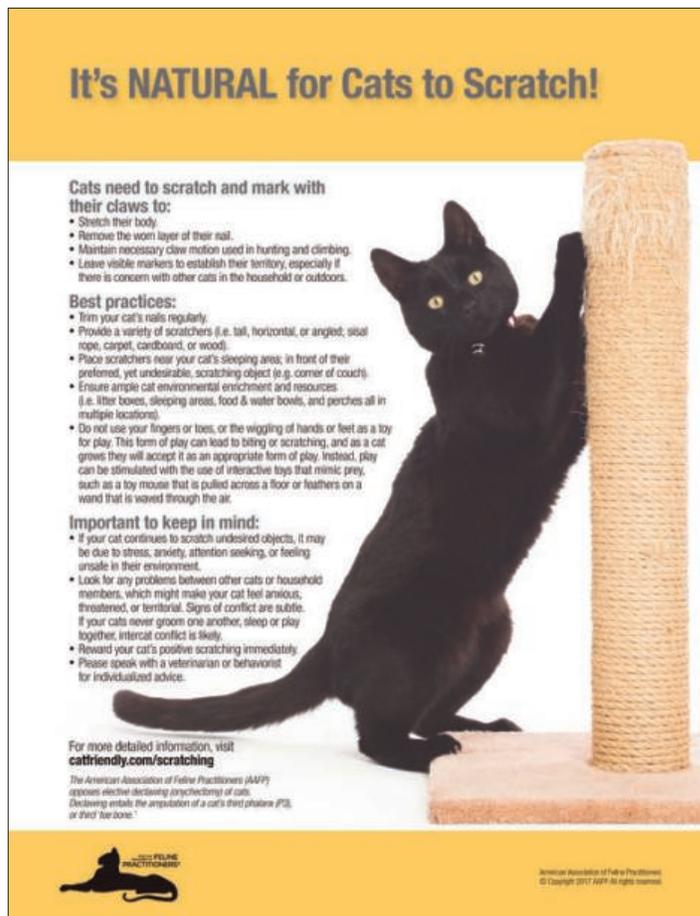


SCRATCHING RESOURCES

Client Education

It's Natural for Cats to Scratch (Flyer)

This is a flyer you can print or hang in your clinic to educate clients about how scratching is a natural behavior for cats. This resource also provides some tips on best practices for their home.



See next page for full size print version.

It's NATURAL for Cats to Scratch!

Cats need to scratch and mark with their claws to:

- Stretch their body.
- Remove the worn layer of their nail.
- Maintain necessary claw motion used in hunting and climbing.
- Leave visible markers to establish their territory, especially if there is concern with other cats in the household or outdoors.

Best practices:

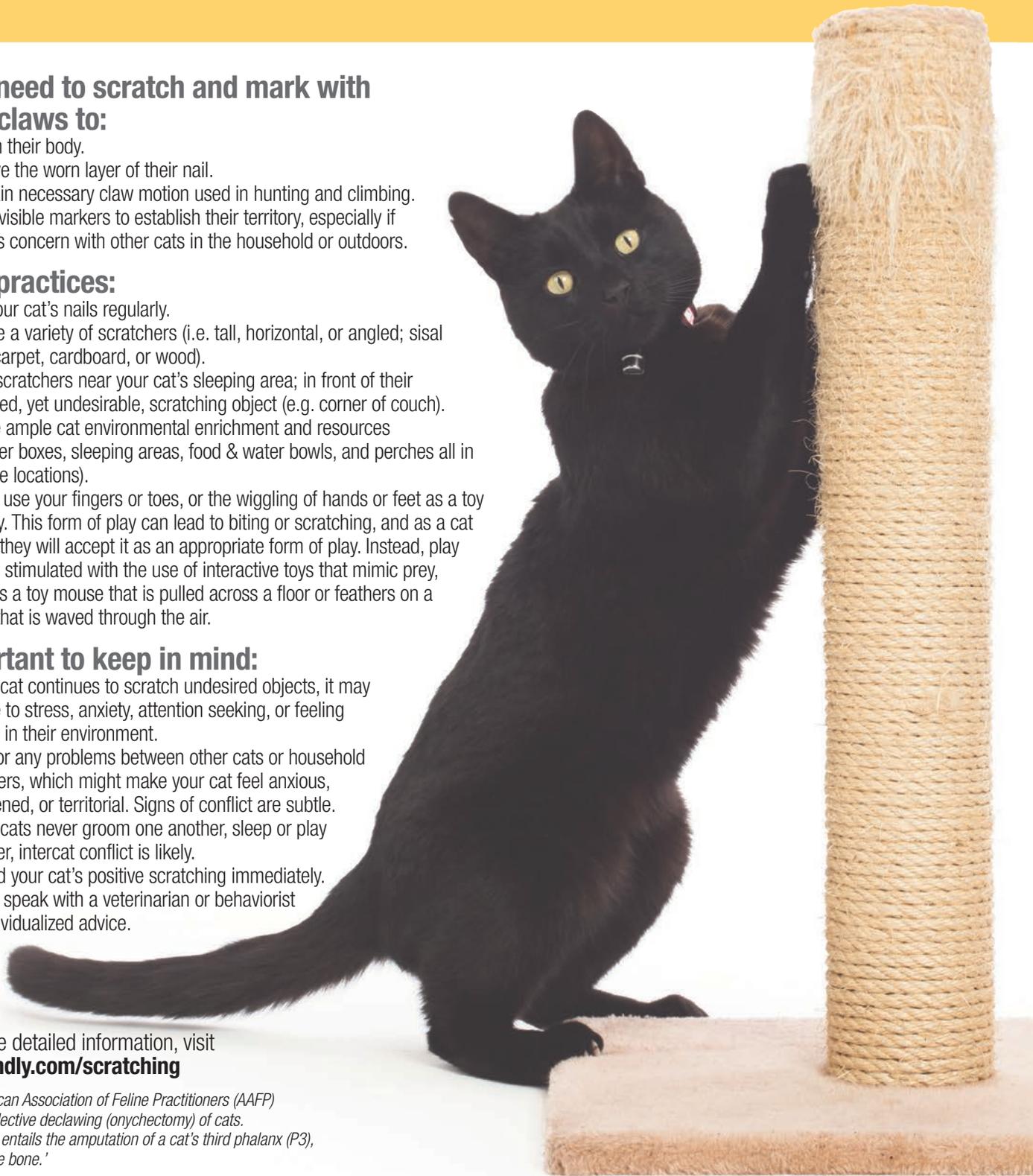
- Trim your cat's nails regularly.
- Provide a variety of scratchers (i.e. tall, horizontal, or angled; sisal rope, carpet, cardboard, or wood).
- Place scratchers near your cat's sleeping area; in front of their preferred, yet undesirable, scratching object (e.g. corner of couch).
- Ensure ample cat environmental enrichment and resources (i.e. litter boxes, sleeping areas, food & water bowls, and perches all in multiple locations).
- Do not use your fingers or toes, or the wiggling of hands or feet as a toy for play. This form of play can lead to biting or scratching, and as a cat grows they will accept it as an appropriate form of play. Instead, play can be stimulated with the use of interactive toys that mimic prey, such as a toy mouse that is pulled across a floor or feathers on a wand that is waved through the air.

Important to keep in mind:

- If your cat continues to scratch undesired objects, it may be due to stress, anxiety, attention seeking, or feeling unsafe in their environment.
- Look for any problems between other cats or household members, which might make your cat feel anxious, threatened, or territorial. Signs of conflict are subtle. If your cats never groom one another, sleep or play together, intercat conflict is likely.
- Reward your cat's positive scratching immediately.
- Please speak with a veterinarian or behaviorist for individualized advice.

For more detailed information, visit catfriendly.com/scratching

The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) opposes elective declawing (onychectomy) of cats. Declawing entails the amputation of a cat's third phalanx (P3), or third 'toe bone.'



SCRATCHING RESOURCES

Client Education

Living with a Clawed Cat - Information for Cat Caregivers (Flyer)

Supply this flyer to appropriately counsel and assist your clients to live in harmony with a clawed cat. Topics include why cats scratch inanimate objects, ideal scratching surfaces, troubleshooting inappropriate scratching, and training cats to scratch appropriately in the home.

LIVING WITH A CLAWED CAT
Information for Cat Caregivers



Scratching is a natural behavior for cats. There are ways you can live alongside your cat in harmony by understanding these natural behaviors and practice good techniques that will enrich your home. Let's learn more about.

Why Do Cats Have Claws?
 Your cats' claws are unique and serve several functions.

Main uses for cats' claws:

- A cat may expose their claws to hunt and use them to grasp and capture their prey.
- Mark territory both visually (scratching inanimate objects) and chemically (via pheromones).
- To defend itself during conflict with other cats or animals.

Why Do Cats Scratch Inanimate Objects?
 Scratching is a natural, normal, and necessary behavior for your cat. Your cat does not scratch to upset you or intentionally damage your furniture. Scratching is a form of communication that your cat expresses during times of stress and anxiety.

Cats scratch for three main reasons:

- To renew the nail by dislodging the old nail growth and exposing a new, sharper nail underneath.
- To mark their territory visually and with scent (pheromones) to other cats and animals.
- To stretch out their limbs.

Your cat may experience increased scratching and marking in times of stress and anxiety, including when environmental resources are threatened or restricted. Discuss your cat's daily routine with your veterinarian so they can address the issue and offer advice to resolve the problem.



Best Practices for Living with a Clawed Cat
 Here are some preventative strategies for living with your clawed cat.

Tips for living with a cat with nails:

- Trim cat's nails regularly (request training from your veterinarian).
- Provide appropriate resources for your cat:
 - Litter boxes
 - Sleeping and resting areas
 - Food bowls
 - Water bowls
 - Scratching surfaces
 - Toys for play
- Provide appropriate environmental enrichment in your home to include interactive play, perches and scratch posts, and human attention if desired.
- Address any inter-cat related issues that may be causing fear or anxiety. Inter-cat conflict is common and a cause of undesirable scratching. The signs are subtle so consult with your veterinarian to help recognize these behavioral problems. Ensure all resources are ample and located in multiple locations throughout your house to prevent competition for these resources if there are multiple cats at home.
- Teach everyone your household that cats should be treated with respect. No one should be allowed to play rough with a cat or handle them in a manner that causes fear, stress, or pain.
- Do not use your fingers or toes, or the wiggling of hands or feet as a toy for play. This form of play can lead to biting or scratching. Instead, play can be stimulated with the use of interactive toys that mimic prey, such as a toy mouse that is pulled across a floor or leathers on a wand that is waved through the air.



(over)

See next 2 pages for full size print version.

LIVING WITH A CLAWED CAT

Information for Cat Caregivers



Scratching is a natural behavior for cats. There are ways you can live alongside your cat in harmony by understanding these natural behaviors and practice good techniques that will enrich your home.

Why Do Cats Have Claws?

Your cats' claws are unique and serve several functions. The forelimb claws of cats are uniquely retractable and allow them to expose or retract their nails as needed.

Main uses for cats' claws:

- A cat may expose their claws to hunt and use them to grasp and capture their prey.
- Mark territory both visually (scratching inanimate objects) and chemically (via pheromones).
- To defend itself during conflict with other cats or animals.

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Best Practices for Living with a Clawed Cat

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Living with a Clawed Cat continued

What Makes an Ideal Scratching Surface?



Each cat prefers different scratching surfaces. To determine which your cat prefers, offer an assortment of scratching options, in a wide variety of locations around your home.

Here are some important scratching post features to keep in mind:

- Size and Shape - Most cats like to scratch vertically. They will need a sturdy post that is taller than their body length to fully

stretch and give a good scratch.

If the cat is scratching carpet, a horizontal scratcher may be a good alternative.

- Texture - The texture of the scratching post is also important. Many cats prefer sisal rope; others prefer corrugated cardboard, carpet, or wood on the scratching surface.
- It is important to experiment with a variety of textures and types of scratchers to determine which is preferred by each cat.

Train Cats to Scratch Appropriately

- Yes, you can train your cat to scratch certain, approved items and train them not to scratch others.
 - Cats often stretch or scratch when they wake up, so place a scratcher near the cat's sleeping area.
 - Place a scratching post or pad near where the cat is currently scratching that is undesirable (e.g. in front of a couch leg, or door to the outside) as the changes in scent profile can result in cats re-marking that area.
 - If the cat scratches somewhere other than the scratching post or pad, pick them up, take them to the scratcher, and then provide a reward.
- Provide rewards and positive reinforcement.
 - Cats learn best through positive reinforcement.



- Immediately after you redirect your cat to use the new scratching post or pad (within 3 seconds), reward them to reinforce positive behavior.
- Try rewarding your cat with items they already like (i.e. treats, catnip, interactive play, and petting or grooming).

Troubleshooting Inappropriate Scratching

Here is some general advice for common issues you may be experiencing with your cat:

- My cat is scratching an undesirable surface.
 - If the surface is near a window or door where your cat can see and/or smell another cat (or other smells), discourage or remove the unwanted cats from the yard, block window views, and use feline facial pheromones.
- My cat is scratching more.
 - Try to identify and address what may be causing your cat stress, anxiety, or frustration.
 - If your cat is stressed or anxious due to changes in the household (people, furniture, smells, etc.), and other options have not helped, discuss appropriate treatment to resolve distress or anxiety with your veterinarian.
 - Discuss any inter-cat issues immediately with your veterinarian.
 - Ensure that your cat has access to a complete set of resources, without being hidden or blocked from use.
 - Take note of your cats' daily routine and review it with your veterinarian.
 - Clean litter boxes regularly and ensure they are placed in multiple locations where one cat cannot block the path of the other (e.g. not in a hallway or near steps).

For more detailed information, access these resources:
[Catfriendly.com/scratching](https://catfriendly.com/scratching)



SCRATCHING RESOURCES

Client Education

It's Natural for Cats to Scratch (Social Media Image)

Use this image and text on your veterinary practice's social media pages to provide education on why cats need to scratch.

A circular inset image showing a brown and white tabby cat standing on its hind legs, reaching up with its front paws to scratch a vertical, textured brown post. The cat's mouth is slightly open, and it appears to be in the middle of a scratching motion.

**It's NATURAL for
Cats to Scratch!**

*Cats need to scratch and mark
with their claws to:*

- Stretch their body
- Remove the worn layer of their nail
- Maintain necessary claw motion used in hunting and climbing
- Leave visible markers to establish their territory, especially if there is concern with other cats in the household or outdoors

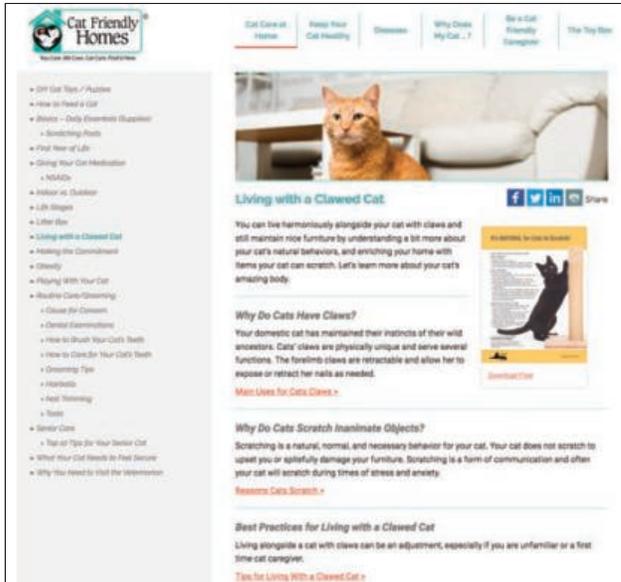
Learn more: www.catfriendly.com/scratching

SCRATCHING RESOURCES

Client Education

Links to AAFP's Client Website - Catfriendly.com

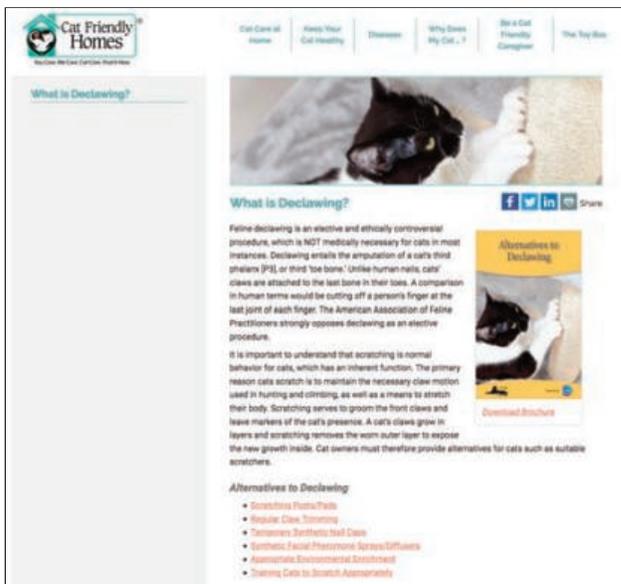
- Living with a Clawed Cat - www.catfriendly.com/scratching



This page covers:

- Why do cats have claws?
- Why do cats scratch inanimate objects?
- Best practices for living with a clawed cat
- What makes an ideal scratching surface?
- Inappropriate scratching tips
- Training your cat to scratch on approved items

- What is Declawing? - www.catfriendly.com/declawing



This page also contains links to information about:

- Scratching Posts/Pads
- Regular Claw Trimming
- Appropriate Environmental Enrichment

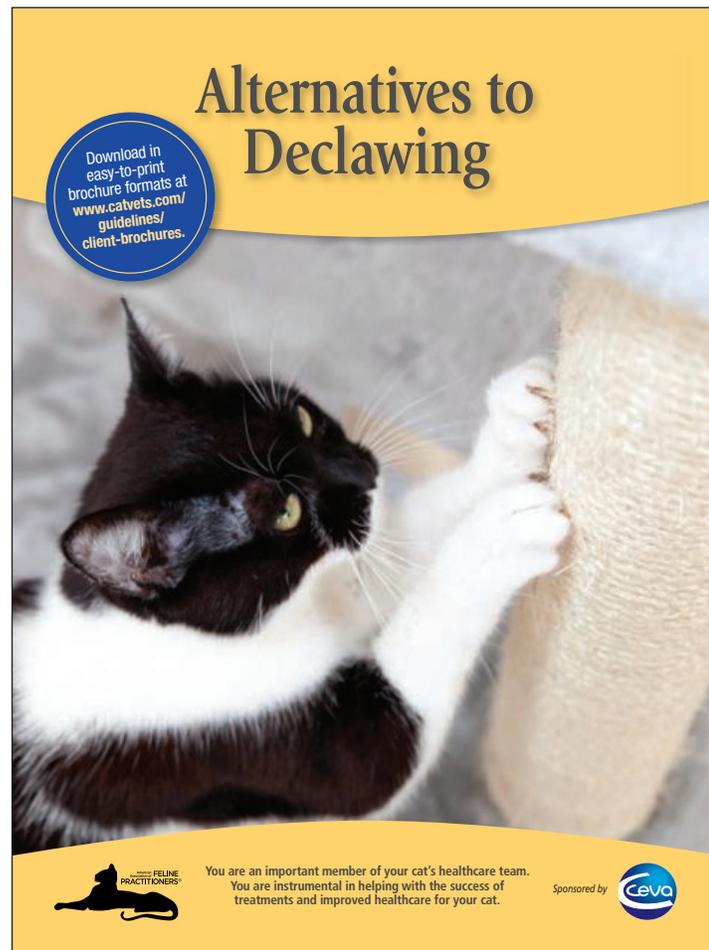
You can share links to these educational pages with your clients via your social media channels, website, and newsletter.



SCRATCHING RESOURCES

Client Education**Alternatives to Declawing Client Brochure**

Share this brochure with your clients to educate them on scratching resources and nail care as appropriate alternatives. You can access an electronic and print ready version of this brochure in the online Toolkit at www.catvets.com/claw-friendly-toolkit (on the Scratching Resources or Client Resources tabs). Additionally, this brochure is available in Spanish and Portuguese online.



See next 2 pages for a condensed version.

Check out our additional client education resources!
<https://catvets.com/claw-friendly-toolkit/client-resources>

Alternatives to Declawing

Download in
easy-to-print
brochure formats at
[www.catvets.com/
guidelines/
client-brochures](http://www.catvets.com/guidelines/client-brochures).



You are an important member of your cat's healthcare team.
You are instrumental in helping with the success of
treatments and improved healthcare for your cat.

Sponsored by



Alternatives to Declawing

WHAT IS DECLAWING?

Feline declawing is an elective and ethically controversial procedure, which is NOT medically necessary for cats in most instances. Declawing entails the amputation of a cat's third phalanx [P3], or third 'toe bone.' Unlike human nails, cats' claws are attached to the last bone in their toes. A comparison in human terms would be cutting off a person's finger at the last joint of each finger.

It is important to understand that scratching is normal behavior for cats, which has an inherent function. The primary reason cats scratch is to maintain the necessary claw motion used in hunting and climbing, as well as a means to stretch their body. Scratching serves to groom the front claws and leave markers of the cat's presence. A cat's claws grow in layers and scratching removes the worn outer layer to expose the new growth inside. Cat owners must therefore provide alternatives for cats such as suitable scratchers.

ALTERNATIVES TO DECLAWING

Scratching posts/pads

Provide your cat with suitable 'scratchers' where they can exhibit normal scratching behavior. Scratchers come in multiple styles and textures. It is important to experiment with a variety of textures and types of scratchers to determine which your cat prefers. Some examples include scratching posts or pads with sisal rope or rough fabric, cardboard boxes, and lumber or logs. Scratchers can be vertical or horizontal and there are even varieties that blend into your home decor.



The placement of scratchers is very important. Cats often stretch or scratch when they wake up so consider placing one near where your cat sleeps. It may also be effective to place a scratcher near or in front of a cat's preferred, yet undesirable, scratching object (e.g. corner of the couch). Kittens and cats can be trained to use scratchers by rewarding use of the scratcher with the cat's favorite treat. If the cat scratches elsewhere, they should be gently picked up, taken to the scratcher, and then rewarded. Cats should always be positively reinforced and never punished.



Regular claw trimming

Regularly trimming your cat's claws can prevent injury and damage to household items. Proper feline nail trimmers should be used to prevent splintering of the claws. The frequency of claw trimming will depend on your cat's lifestyle. Indoor cats, kittens, and older cats will need more regular nail trims, whereas outdoor cats may naturally wear down their nails requiring less frequent trimming. If possible, start trimming as kittens so they become comfortable with the process early on. If your cat does not like claw trimmings start slow, offer breaks, and make it a familiar routine. Ask your veterinarian for advice or a demonstration on trimming your cat's claws. Always trim claws in a calm environment and provide positive reinforcement. Proper training to scratch on appropriate surfaces, combined with nail care, can prevent damage in the home.



Temporary synthetic nail caps

These caps are glued over your cat's nails to help prevent human injury and damage to household items. The nail caps usually need to be re-applied every 4-6 weeks; therefore they may be a less desirable alternative to regular nail trimming, suitable scratchers, and environmental enrichment.

Synthetic facial pheromone sprays/diffusers

Continued scratching by cats may be related to stress, anxiety, attention seeking, or a perceived lack of security in their environment. Anxiety can also be intensified by punishment, thus driving the cat to increase scratching behaviors in the same or other undesirable locations in the home. Consider using synthetic facial pheromone sprays and/or diffusers to help relieve anxiety or stress. Apply a synthetic pheromone spray such as Feliway® on the objects or areas in your home where your cat has exhibited undesired scratching. Do so after cleaning with soap and water to remove the communication marking scents left by your cat's paws. Applying daily comforting pheromones can prevent your cat's need to mark these areas again. Feliway® should not be sprayed on the desired scratcher. If undesirable scratching occurs in several rooms, indicating a more generalized anxiety or stress, it is recommended to also plug-in a synthetic pheromone diffuser such as Feliway® to comfort your cat in their home environment.

Appropriate environmental enrichment

Providing your cat with an environment that is enriching is vital to teaching your cat to scratch on appropriate objects. Destructive scratching can occur in cats because their needs have not been fully met. Cats need the proper resources to perform their natural behaviors and have control over their social interactions. You can enhance your cat's health and well-being by ensuring all their needs are met in the home. The AAFP has a wealth of information for cat owners on environmental enrichment. Visit: www.catvets.com/environmental-needs.

For more information on declawing, declawing alternatives, and claw trimming, visit:
www.catvets.com/declawalternatives