

Scratching is a normal, instinctive cat behavior. Cats have a need to scratch. They do it to express emotions, like excitement or stress, to mark objects with their scent (they have scent glands in their paws), to remove the dead part of their nails and, often, just to get a good stretch

## Alternatives to Declawing:

- Nail caps
  - Acrylic/plastic nail caps placed on your cats normal nails; this makes them blunt and much less likely to cause damage
  - Come in a variety of colors; usually can get a large amount for relatively inexpensive price - ex: Purrdy Paws, Soft Claws, Kitty Caps
  - Nail caps can be placed by your veterinarian, or you can do them at home if your cat will tolerate it.
  - The nails must be trimmed before placing the caps
  - Caps must be replaced every 4-6 weeks, depending on how fast your cat's nails grow.
  - Caps will fall off as the nail grows out; rarely will they all fall off at the same time.
  - If caps do not come off naturally, consult manufacturer/seek the help of your veterinarian
  
- Scratching posts/toys
  - Provide scratchers with preferable materials - carpet, cardboard, sisal rope
  - Provide natural options if possible - wood/tree bark - oak, maple, redwood (hard woods)
  - Pick a scratcher based on what your cat is already scratching. If your cat is scratching your carpet, they may prefer a horizontal scratcher. If your cat is scratching the arm of the couch while sitting on the floor, they may prefer a vertical scratcher
  - Multiple types of scratchers and different locations of the house is important - cats love to scratch + stretch. Put one near their favorite sleeping area; or combine this and provide a cat tower/condo. Put one near the furniture they're scratching. High traffic areas - scratching is a way your cat marks their territory; cats have scent glands in their paws and scratching leaves visual and olfactory information for other cats in the area (even if you have one cat).

- Bigger is usually better - your cat can stretch quite a bit and many cats love to scratch and stretch at the same time. Providing a tall scratcher/tree can satisfy this behavior and redirect it from furniture.
- Furniture deterrents
  - Double sided tape (specifically for cat scratching) - Panther Armor, Sticky Paws, Clawguard
  - Aluminum foil
  - Citrus spray - water and lemon juice (spot test for staining first)
- Routine nail trims
  - Some cats need nail trims as often as every 1-2 weeks; but most need to be done about every 4-6 weeks.
  - Start getting new cats/kittens used to nail trims as soon as possible! Start with getting you cat used to their paws being touched
  - Use cat friendly clippers
  - Make the experience low-stress; if you can only trim one nail at a time, it's a good start! Use treats for food motivated cats. Take breaks and use positive reinforcement
  - Use the "burrito method" for spicy kitties.
  - Bring your cat to EOA for nail trims if needed
- Pheromone sprays/diffusers
  - Continued scratching by cats may be related to stress, anxiety, attention seeking, or a perceived lack of security in their environment.
  - 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.