

BEHAVIOR

Scratching: Why Cats Do It and How to Redirect It

Scratching is normal and necessary. Give cats the right surface in the right place, and furniture is usually left alone.

By Catt County Cat Nippers • Reviewed October 15, 2026 • 1 min read • 2 cited sources

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Why cats scratch

Scratching is normal behavior, not a medical problem. It leaves scent from glands in the paws, removes the old outer layer of the claws, and stretches the muscles of the back and legs.

Choose the right post

- Sturdy: it must not wobble or tip over.
- Tall enough for a full stretch, if your cat scratches upward.
- Watch your cat: some prefer vertical posts, others horizontal pads. Match what they already scratch.
- Rough materials such as sisal rope are popular.

Put it in the right place

- Place a post right beside the furniture the cat already scratches, and in areas where the cat rests and spends time.
- Make the old spot less appealing for a while, for example with a throw or double-sided tape.
- Praise or reward the cat when it uses the post. Never punish scratching.
- Trim nails regularly.

Sources

1. Clinician's Brief — Understanding Feline Scratching Behavior
<https://www.cliniciansbrief.com/article/scratching-behavior-cats>
2. AAFP & ISFM — Feline Behavior Guidelines (PDF)
<https://catvets.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/FelineBehaviorGLS.pdf>