

Inappropriate Scratching

The following guidelines will help the owner redirect the cat's scratching activity to appropriate targets.

- The home must be equipped with a suitable scratching post. (A good scratching post is as necessary as food dishes and litter boxes!) The post should be at least 30" tall, wrapped with sisal rope, and mounted in a sturdy, untipable base. Please be advised that carpeting is not an appealing scratching surface for cats. The scratching post should be placed in a room where the cat spends a lot of time and where he/she sleeps.
- Cats often scratch and stretch when they wake up or before they begin a play session. Placing the post near the chair or sofa that was previously the scratching target is often a good choice. Cats also scratch to mark their territory. Objects or furniture near doors or the entrance to rooms may become scratching targets. If this is the case, rearranging the furniture and/or placing a post in this area is advisable.
- The cat should be lavishly praised and occasionally rewarded with a food treat whenever observed using the post. For cats five months and older, rubbing a little catnip on the post once a week will add to its appeal. Furniture that the cat had been scratching previously should be made unavailable or offensive to the cat by covering it or placing a few strips of double-sided carpet tape on the scratched area. Once the cat is in the habit of scratching on the post, the furniture will be left alone.
- Kittens under three months of age do more climbing than serious scratching and should be encouraged to climb the post to obtain a favorite toy or food treat. Corrugated scratching pads are inexpensive and can be purchased at most pet stores. They make excellent horizontal scratching targets and can be placed throughout the house. They should be used in addition to the scratching post which satisfies the need for scratching on a vertical surface.