

# KC PET PROJECT

Kansas City Pet Project

[www.kcpetproject.org](http://www.kcpetproject.org)

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## Teach Your Cat to Scratch Where You Want

**Scratching is a natural and healthy thing for cats to do.** (This is only one reason why **declawing a cat is almost always the wrong choice**) If you are going to stop your cat from scratching furniture or other things, you must provide things you want her to scratch, such as a scratching post. This checklist will help make sure your cat scratches only where appropriate. Check off each step as you go:

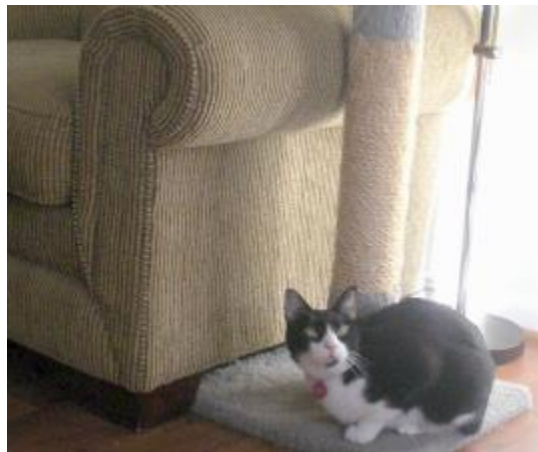
- Provide a high quality scratching post.** It should be:
  - **At least three feet high and sturdy.** (Cats like to stretch when scratching, so the post shouldn't move or fall down.)
  - Made of sisal, a type of rope many cats enjoy scratching.
- If your cat is scratching something you don't want her to—such as the arm of a couch or a rug—place the scratching post next to it or, in the case of the rug, on it.**
- Place the scratching post in other encouraging spots.** Your cat might like to show off in a prominent place (and you can reward him with a treat when he does). Or he might enjoy having the post near a favorite sleeping spot—cats like to stretch when they wake up from a good nap.
- Encourage your cat to use the scratching post.** Here's how:
  - Rub catnip on the post regularly.
  - Play with him around the post—cats like to scratch while playing.
  - Get on your hands and knees and scratch the post to show her how much fun it is. (Cats are excellent observers.)
- If your cat doesn't use his scratching post, don't give up.** He may prefer a scratching post made of carpet or a corrugated cardboard scratching pad. (If he's shown he likes to scratch carpets, give him a carpet-covered scratching post.) Or he might like to scratch horizontally, so try something you can lay on the floor.
- Give your cat enough exercise and interesting things to do.** A bored cat with lots of energy may be more likely to scratch.
- Make sure that your cat isn't feeling stress.** Cats who are stressed may scratch things to mark their territory to feel safer.

### Try a Deterrent

If none of the above techniques have kept your cat from jumping or sitting on a place where you don't want her, **put something there that will make that spot unpleasant**. You can remove it once your cat has learned to avoid that place.

**Deterrents are more effective than squirting your cat with water or making a loud noise.** Those things only work when you're around, and they don't teach your cat what you want her to do. Try the deterrents listed below in any order:

- **Double-sided tape** Cats avoid walking on sticky surfaces. Attach a tape such as Sticky Paws (sold at pet-supply stores) to metal, plastic, wood, leather, or fabric surfaces.
- **Bubble wrap** This packing material with bubbles that pop is not something most cats want to walk on. Tape it onto the arms of chairs or counter tops or drape it over couches or beds.
- **Water** Cats typically avoid jumping or stepping into water. Put aluminum trays filled with an inch of water on counter tops, tables, or any area you do not want the cat to go. (This option can cause a bit of a mess.)
- **Rubber nubs** The rubber nubs that hold car mats and carpet runners in place are usually uncomfortable for cats to step on. Flip over a mat or runner and place it on a flat surface: counter top, table, bed, or couch.
- **Plastic shower curtains** Generally, cats dislike stepping on smooth plastic. Drape a thick plastic shower curtain over couches, beds, or tables when you're not using them.
- **Citrus** The smell of citrus is unpleasant to most cats. Using citrus alone isn't usually a strong deterrent, but adding lemon or lime juice (or a citrus spray carried by a pet-supply store) to any of the other materials will make them more powerful deterrents.



*Where's a good place for a scratching post? Next to the chair your cat loves to sink his claws into. Nancy Peterson/The HSUS*