

Train cats to scratch the right way

Scratching is a normal, healthy cat behavior. They do it to relieve stress, stretch their muscles, mark their territory and remove the outer sheath of their claws. However, this doesn't mean that every upholstered surface in the house gets sacrificed to scratching.

Kittens begin to scratch at about eight weeks, which is the perfect time to introduce them to a scratching post, cardboard scratching box or other "approved" scratching area. Experiment with styles and materials to find what your cat likes best. Adult cats can also be trained to use these surfaces.

Other humane alternatives to declawing include:

- Regularly trimming cat's claws to minimize damage to surfaces
- **Soft Paws**[®] – soft, vinyl caps glued to your cat's nails that blunt the nail tip and prevent damage. Reapply approximately every six weeks

Ask your **vet** or **visit softpaws.com**



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The truth *about* declawing



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Declawing cats can cause permanent harm

Many new cat owners are under the misguided impression that declawing their cats is an easy, harmless, quick fix for unwanted scratching damage.

The truth is, whether performed with a scalpel or the new laser technique, declawing is major, potentially disfiguring surgery that can have lasting effects on both the cat's physical and behavioral health.

Simply put,
if performed
on humans,
declawing is the
equivalent of
cutting off each
finger at the last
knuckle.



Potential medical complications

Every cat that's declawed experiences days of pain and discomfort. But other, more serious side effects can include infection and tissue necrosis (tissue death) as well as lameness and back pain.

Declawing changes the way a cat's foot meets the ground, causing changes in the way they walk and creating discomfort similar to what humans feel when wearing an ill-fitting pair of shoes.

There's also the potential for regrowth of improperly removed claws, nerve damage and bone spurs.

Potential behavior complications

For several days after the surgery, shredded newspaper must be used in the litter box. The unfamiliar smell and feel of the paper, along with the pain that occurs when scratching in the box, can lead to cats to develop litter box aversion, a behavioral problem that causes them to stop using the litter box because of associating pain with the act of covering waste.

Also, because of the absence of their first line of natural defense, declawed cats may become biters in situations where they feel threatened or powerless.