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Cats and Scratching Behavior

For all cats, scratching or “sharpening claws” is normal behavior. It keeps the claws in shape by helping to shed outer layers of dead nail. It also serves as scent marking behavior. There are a number of things you as an owner can do to minimize damage to your carpets, furniture, etc.

- **Trim your cat’s nails regularly**, at least once a month. There are special scissors available or you can use human nail clippers.
- **Provide scratching posts.** They come in different styles and textures: upright and horizontal, fabric, cardboard, carpet and sisal, and some are catnip scented. You may need to experiment to see which your cat prefers, but it is worth it.

If you have a cat who already scratches inappropriately, you can try different methods to discourage this behavior. The most obvious, of course, is to keep the cat locked out of any room you don’t want them scratching. You can also cover areas with aluminum foil or double sided sticky contact paper. Cats dislike both. You can purchase furniture corner protectors through some pet supply companies.

If you catch your cat in the act, squirt them with a squirt gun or spray bottle set on “stream.” Try not to let them see you as the source of the water, but rather let them associate the cold water with the act of scratching.

