

Cat: Scratching Posts



Why Get a Scratching Post?

Cats scratch on things for two reasons: to shed their claws and to mark their territory. To save your furniture from damage, you need to provide your cat with a scratching post or two and teach him how to use it.

Tips for Scratching Post Use:

- Vertical posts must be sturdy and tall enough for the cat to stretch his body. Horizontal marking posts are preferred by some cats. Try both types to find out what your cat prefers.
- The posts should be located in prominent areas in your home. Cats often scratch when they wake up from a nap so put one near the cat's sleeping area.
- You can buy ready-made scratching posts at the pet store, or you can make your own. A simple log is preferred by some cats. For others, a piece of corrugated cardboard mounted on a piece of wood works just fine. Although most pre-made posts are covered with carpet, this may not be the best material to use. **Cats can get their claws stuck in the fabric loops and stop using the post as a result.** Try attaching the carpet upside down or using another material like upholstery fabric that is more "shreddable".
- Attract your cat to the post using catnip. Sprinkle the catnip on the base and into the fabric, or hang bags of catnip from the top. Spend time near the post encouraging your cat to interact with it. Play with the cat near the post and incorporate it into your play.
- The most important step is to reward the cat every time he uses the post. Have yummy food treats nearby and give one to the cat whenever you see him scratching the post.

Once your cat is using the scratching post you have provided, you can teach him that other things are off limits. If you catch your cat scratching the sofa or chair, make those areas undesirable by covering them with aluminum foil or double sided sticky tape or lightly spray the area with a lemon scent. **Do not spray or scold your cat as this can make him fearful of you and your cat may learn to scratch the sofa or couch in your absence.** It's important to entice your cat to the scratching post and praise him for using it.

Types of Posts

Horizontal or vertical. The first thing to consider when buying your cat a scratching post or furniture is whether or not he prefers vertical or horizontal surfaces. Some cats like to rear up and pull down, while others like to stretch way out along the floor and pull. Most large cat trees provide both surfaces, while the basic post is more for vertical than horizontal. Cardboard types tend to lie directly on the floor. Some types of vertical scratching posts can be hung from a doorknob or off the back of a door. The best thing you can do is observe your cat. If he tends to rear up to claw, then a vertical post is your best bet. If your cat favors your carpet or rugs, then a floor-based horizontal scratching post is better.

Sisal rope. Sisal rope scratching posts and cat furniture provide long-lasting scratching surfaces for cats. Sisal is very tough and resists shredding very well. Sisal scratching posts are excellent choices for cats that prefer to claw and scratch rough surfaces. The main downside to sisal is that it is not very easy to incorporate catnip into in order to make it more attractive to your cat.

Cat: Scratching Posts *(continued)*

Carpet. Carpeted scratching posts and cat furniture make up the bulk of most manufactured products. It is easily made, easy to work with, and can be attached to many different surfaces and shapes. Carpet is not nearly as durable as sisal, so over time it shreds and loses bits of the nap, making it messy. Carpet also retains dirt and debris, so it will need occasional vacuuming.

Cardboard. Cardboard scratching surfaces are fairly new and by far the cheapest alternative. Most cardboard scratching surfaces are refillable. Cardboard, which has a lot of holes, can easily accommodate catnip to make it more attractive; however, it shreds easily, leading to bits of cardboard around the house. Some cats also like to chew on cardboard, which is not good due to the chemicals present within it.

Wood. Wood is another type of scratching surface. These types are not very common but are probably the closest thing to what a cat in the wild would use to stretch, mark, and shed on. A wood post will be very durable, more so than sisal. It does not lend itself to hosting catnip, but it also will not retain dirt or leave bits of itself lying around.