

Environmental Optimization: The Science of Scratching Substrates



Environmental Solutions and the Science of Scratching

The most effective alternative to declawing is to provide an environment that satisfies your cat's natural urge to scratch.

Find Your Cat's Preferred Scratching Surface

In your cat's view, not all scratching posts are created equal! A common reason for the failure of alternatives is that the cat does not have a scratching post that meets their sensory or physical preferences.

Scratching Material	Benefits
Sisal Rope	Provides significant resistance and a coarse texture that effectively catches the claw sheath.
Corrugated Cardboard	Offers a satisfying "shredding" sensation and distinct visual marking; often infused with catnip.
Natural Wood (Logs)	Mimics the outdoor environment; provides the most stable and authentic scratching experience.
Carpet Remnants	Familiar texture to many household items; soft enough to provide a pleasant tactile experience.



Introducing Your New Scratcher

Placement is often more important than the material of the scratcher itself. To redirect behavior effectively, appropriate scratchers must be more convenient and attractive than the furniture.



- **Place Near Resting Areas:** Cats are most motivated to stretch and scratch immediately upon waking. Placing a vertical post or horizontal pad directly next to where the cat sleeps facilitates this natural routine.
- **Place Near Problem Areas:** If a cat has already selected a specific sofa corner, a scratching post should be placed directly in front of that location. This provides an immediate, acceptable alternative in the cat's chosen territorial marking spot. If desired, you can incrementally move the scratcher away from the problem area to the desired area.
- **Place in High-Traffic Zones:** Scratching is a form of "instant messaging" for other residents. Posts should be placed near room entrances, hallways, or areas where the cat spends a significant amount of social time.
- **Test for Stability:** A scratching post must be tall enough to allow for a full vertical stretch and heavy enough to remain stationary. If a post wobbles or falls over, the cat will likely view it as a threat or an ineffective tool and return to the stability of the sofa.

Learn more at catfriendly.com and catvets.com
