

# It's NATURAL for Cats to Scratch!

## Cats need to scratch and mark with their claws to:

- Stretch their body.
- Remove the worn layer of their nail.
- Maintain necessary claw motion used in hunting and climbing.
- Leave visible markers to establish their territory, especially if there is concern with other cats in the household or outdoors.

## Best practices:

- Trim your cat's nails regularly.
- Provide a variety of scratchers (i.e. tall, horizontal, or angled; sisal rope, carpet, cardboard, or wood).
- Place scratchers near your cat's sleeping area; in front of their preferred, yet undesirable, scratching object (e.g. corner of couch).
- Ensure ample cat environmental enrichment and resources (i.e. litter boxes, sleeping areas, food & water bowls, and perches all in multiple locations).
- Do not use your fingers or toes, or the wiggling of hands or feet as a toy for play. This form of play can lead to biting or scratching, and as a cat grows they will accept it as an appropriate form of play. Instead, play can be stimulated with the use of interactive toys that mimic prey, such as a toy mouse that is pulled across a floor or feathers on a wand that is waved through the air.

## Important to keep in mind:

- If your cat continues to scratch undesired objects, it may be due to stress, anxiety, attention seeking, or feeling unsafe in their environment.
- Look for any problems between other cats or household members, which might make your cat feel anxious, threatened, or territorial. Signs of conflict are subtle. If your cats never groom one another, sleep or play together, intercat conflict is likely.
- Reward your cat's positive scratching immediately.
- Please speak with a veterinarian or behaviorist for individualized advice.

For more detailed information, visit [catfriendly.com/scratching](http://catfriendly.com/scratching)

*The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) opposes elective declawing (onychectomy) of cats. Declawing entails the amputation of a cat's third phalanx (P3), or third 'toe bone.'*

