

SCRATCHING

Just because you get super frustrated when your adorable new kitten scratches your couch, your favorite chair and the carpet doesn't mean you're a bad pet parent.

Instead of having a mini heart attack each and every time your ball of fur decides she needs to flex her claws, vow to train her to use a scratching post instead.

Here's how:

- **Find the Perfect Post**

This next sentence pretty much goes without saying: cats are picky. And they'll be picky about which post they prefer to use, as well. Prepare yourself ahead of time for the fact that you may need to try out a couple different options before you find the scratching post that'll get the job done. Look for something that's tall enough for your cat to stretch her full length to scratch, and something that won't easily fall apart (obviously).

Some cats might prefer horizontal surfaces, too, so if a vertical post doesn't seem to be doing the trick, you might try switching to a scratching box that lays flat on the floor.

- **Pick the Perfect Spot**

It's crucial to place your scratching post in an area where your cat frequents, and where she's most likely to do her scratching. You may find that using a couple different posts next to the household items that your cat frequently scratches will be the best bet. A perfect spot is next to where kitty sleeps. Cats love to stretch and scratch after waking up.

- **Set the Perfect Trap**

If your kitten's used to clawing at your furniture, it may take a while for her to realize that she's meant to use her new, fancy scratching post instead. Have patience! Entice your kitten to use the scratching post by sprinkling catnip or spray Feliway on it, or dangling a toy above it for her to try to capture.

- **Be Persistent**

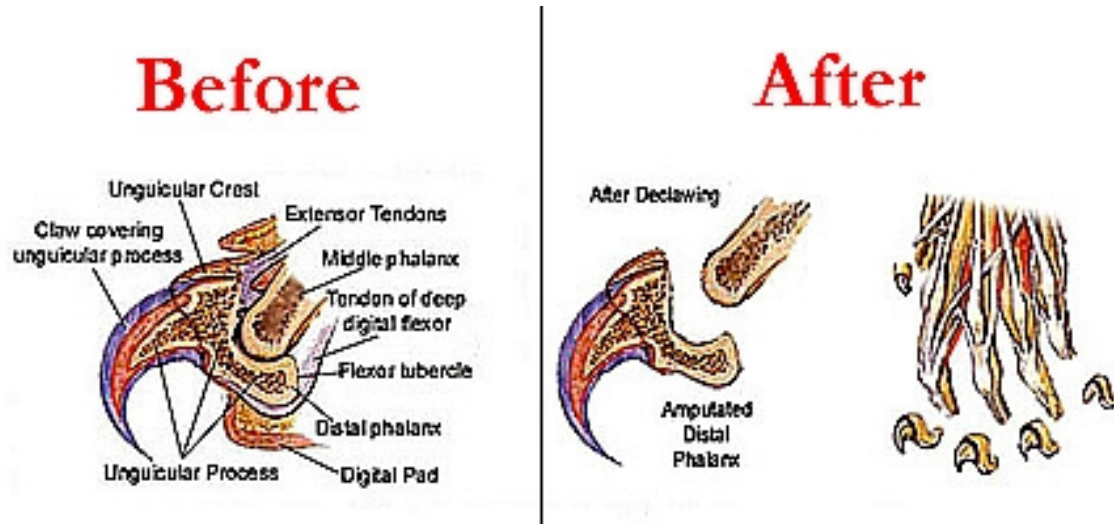
The next time you catch your kitten clawing somewhere he shouldn't be, use a commanding, strong tone to let him know that's wrong. Then, pick him up and put him in front of his scratching post. If he scratches it right away, praise him. And when you catch him scratching where he's supposed to throughout the day, it doesn't hurt to lay the praise on at those times, either.

Declawing

Whatever you try to make your Moggy not shred your favourite sofa to pieces, declawing is not an acceptable option for the beautiful, loving animal that depends on you. The reasons to avoid declawing are compelling, for you as well as for your cat.

Declawing is literally maiming a cat, a mistake that can lead to physical, emotional and behavioural complications. It is erroneous to think that declawing a cat is a trivial procedure similar to trimming fingernails. A cat's claws are a vital part of its anatomy, essential to balance, mobility and survival.

Declawing is an irreversible surgical procedure that involves amputating the last joint of the cat's "toes." It is a very painful procedure with strong potential to secondary complications. (Imagine having the last joint of your own fingers amputated. Not a pleasant idea.)



On rare occasions declawing may lead to secondary contracture of the tendons. This makes it uncomfortable for the cat to walk. Since the last joints of their front paws are missing, they compensate by placing more of their weight to the hind quarters, causing them to be out of balance. This shift of weight to the hind quarters may lead to atrophy of the muscles of their front quarters.

Deprived of its front claws a cat may become insecure and distressed. Kitty's display of distress tends to take such forms as urinating on your favourite rug or spraying your antique armoire. Feeling defenceless without her claws, Kitty may become hostile to people (including you), and to other cats and become more apt to bite.

Some cats develop an aversion to their litter box because of the pain associated with scratching in the litter after a declawing procedure. If Kitty doesn't go in the box, she will find a more comfortable place to do her business. Often times, these habits are hard to break.

Some European countries have ruled declawing illegal! It is considered inhumane.

For more information on declawing, please visit www.declawing.com.

Alternate Solutions:

A) Trimming your cat's nails.

If you don't feel comfortable doing this little procedure, take your kitty to the vet to get it done.

B) Soft Paws® — An excellent alternative

Soft Paws® are great for households with small children, as they guard against the child getting scratched. They are also extremely useful for people who are away from home all day and simply can't apply the watchfulness necessary to train a cat to use a scratching post. An important caveat

here, however; they should be used *only* on indoor cats, since they blunt one of the cat's chief means of self-defence.

Soft Paws® last approximately six weeks once Kitty becomes accustomed to them. At first they may feel a bit strange to her and she may groom them excessively, causing them to come off sooner. She'll get used to them quickly though, and thereafter they will last longer. It is amazing how well cats tolerate the Soft Paws®, most don't even notice they are wearing them.



A word about punishment—Don't do it!

Cats don't understand physical punishment. In addition to it being wrong to hit your cat, punishment simply doesn't work and is likely to make your situation worse. Clever though Kitty is about many things, she won't understand that you're punishing her for scratching the couch. She will only compute that sometimes when you catch her she is treated badly. This may make her insecure and stimulate her to scratch more or develop other undesirable behaviour problems.

Eventually you will break the trust and security that is the basis for your cat's relationship with you, and you will find it very difficult to catch her for any reason at all.