



# Guide To Nail Trimming

Many times, if someone has an indoor cat, they automatically think that the cat needs to be declawed in order to save the furniture from being shredded. This isn't true. By nail trimming (which keeps the nail short enough that it can't snag anything) and introducing a scratching post, you and your cat can live harmoniously without having to worry about the destruction of your expensive couch or chair.

Most people think that cats only scratch to sharpen their claws, but the main reason they do it is to remove the dead nail sheath around new nail growth. Cats also scratch to stretch the muscles in their legs and paws (have you noticed that Kitty likes to scratch right after waking up from a nap?). Also, cats have scent glands located in their paw pads so they scratch to mark territory. Which may explain why she has "claimed" her favorite couch by scratching it. Scratching is a natural cat behavior. You cannot train your cat not to scratch. However, you *can* train her to scratch only in appropriate places (like a scratching post).

## *Scratching Posts*

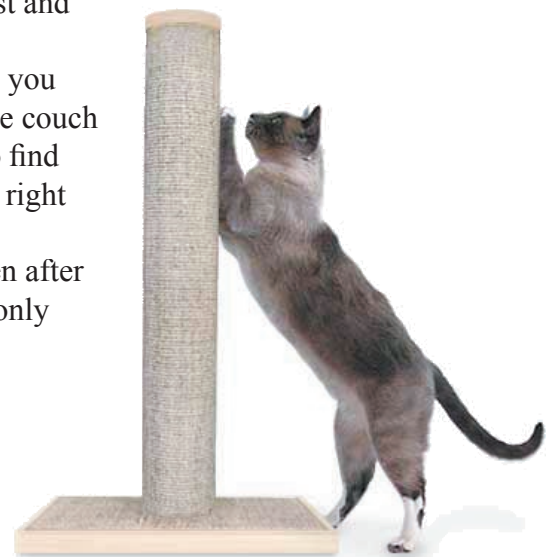
Every cat should have a scratching post. This doesn't necessarily mean each cat needs their own, but just like people, every cat is different and has their own personal preferences. For example, some cats like to scratch on carpet, and others on different materials. That is why scratching posts come in a variety of fabrics. The most popular are the carpet posts and posts wrapped in sisal rope (which has a tough and fibrous texture). In my own home, one of my cats prefers the carpet and while the other prefers the sisal, so I have one of each (it beats having them destroy the couch).

- As mentioned above, cats scratch when first waking up from a nap, so put the post close to her favorite sleeping spot.
- When you see her getting close to or start scratching on the post, reinforce her with positive verbal praise and lavish petting after she's finished. You may need to rub or spray a little cat nip on the post to make it more desirable to scratch.
- If you find she doesn't like one material, try another. You may even make your own scratching post with any type of material. Just be sure that it is tall enough that the cat can completely stretch out and the base is stable enough that it won't tip over during vigorous scratching. If Kitty is just learning to scratch on her post and it flips over and scares her, she may be reluctant to try it again.

If your cat has already decided that her favorite spot to scratch is on the furniture, you'll need to break that bad habit while replacing it with the acceptable one (the scratching post).

- Every time you witness her scratching the couch, make an unpleasant sound such as a loud clap and sharply saying her name. Immediately put her by her scratching post and drag her paws across the material while positively praising her.
- Be consistent and patient. If she doesn't respond to this after awhile, you may need to temporarily place double-sided tape to the corner of the couch that she scratches the most. She'll hate the stickiness and will try to find somewhere else to scratch. Take this opportunity to point her in the right direction.
- Remember to always verbally praise her when she uses the post, even after it's become a regular habit, to reinforce in her mind that this is the only acceptable place to scratch.

Let's move along now to nail trimming techniques.





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## *Nail Trimming*

Trimming the nails keeps them short with no hooked or sharp points to snag material. We recommend the scissor-style trimmers (which is what we use here at The Cat Practice). Nail trimmers are inexpensive (no more than \$10 and often a lot less) and are available at pet stores.

If possible, start introducing a nail trimming routine when the cat is young. If your cat is already older, it may still be accomplished but it'll most likely take more time for her to tolerate it.

- In either case, when she is napping or in a calm mood, gently touch her paws and toes. This will help her get used to having someone touching her feet. Play with her toes and extend her claws by applying gentle pressure to the paw pad and last joint of the toe.
- Praise her when she allows you to do this without resistance.
- Keep it short and positive.
- Try to do it a couple times a day while she's lying around the house.

Once she's used to having her paws handled, you can start trimming the nails. You may either put her on her back in your lap, or if she doesn't like being on her back, choose an elevated place to put her like a table or counter.

- Gently extend a paw and expose a nail as described above. When you extend a nail, look closely at it. You will see pink running through the center of the nail. This is called the quick and is where the nerve and blood vessel is located. You will be cutting that nail above the quick in the dead part (the white area) of the nail.
- Place the trimmers around the white part of the nail and cut in one quick motion.
- Trim a little bit at a time at first until you get used to how close you can get to the quick without hitting it.
- Nail trimming doesn't hurt (contrary to what she'll try to make you believe!). Only if you accidentally cut too short (into the quick) will she feel a little pain, and still, it's not the end of the world. If it happens, just take a little flour (regular flour that you bake with) and apply it to the end of the nail where it's bleeding. This will clot the blood and stop the bleeding.
- You can do one or two nails at a time at first and work your way up to doing all of them in one session.
- Plan on trimming her nails once every 2 weeks or so, depending on how fast they grow. The more you do it, the more she'll get used to it.
- Be sure to speak in a calm and reassuring voice throughout that entire process and give positive reinforcement afterwards like a tasty treat or something else your kitty really enjoys.

You will be surprised how much of a difference that nail trimming and having a scratching post makes in regards to your furniture (and sanity!). Nail trimming can be a positive bonding experience for you and your kitty, believe it or not. If you are unsure about how to do nail trimming or would like a demonstration by someone experienced, feel free to call us here at The Cat Practice and we'd be more than glad to help. And if your cat simply refuses to cooperate after trying all the steps mentioned above, we can suggest alternatives. For more information, call us!

