



Destructive Behavior: Scratching Objects

If your cat is scratching your couch or carpets, rest assured it isn't because she disagrees with your choice of home furnishings. Perhaps it's the texture of material or the sturdiness of the couch that her current scratching post is lacking. If your cat is inappropriately scratching items in your home in place of her scratching post, she is trying to communicate with you. A closer look into what and where she is scratching can shed light on how to best approach the issue.

Scratching is:

- a necessary behavior for cats and is not something that should be eliminated
- a great way for your cat to stretch her muscles and release tension, stress or excitement
- a visual mark that tells other cats there is another cat in the area ☞ a way for her to comfort herself with familiar smells, reaffirming she belongs
- a way for cats to exchange information with other cats

If you examine your current scratcher setup, you might be surprised that just a few simple tweaks can resolve the destructive scratching. In some cases, you will need to use some deterrent techniques and retrain your cat how to use her scratcher.

If...	Then consider...
You have provided your cat a flat scratcher but she still scratches your couch.	A sturdy vertical scratching post- your cat may prefer a tall surface to scratch on.
You have a sturdy vertical scratcher but your cat still scratches your couch.	Looking at the material of the scratcher- carpeting can sometimes snag nails or be too soft to effectively remove the dead nail sheath. Try wrapping the post with rope or sisal.
The current scratcher is tucked away or placed in a seldom used room.	Moving the scratcher into a socially significant area where family often gathers, such as a living room or den.
Your home has more than one cat, but only one scratcher.	Adding another scratcher- scratching is a marking behavior and by claiming a scratcher with their scent it helps them feel secure. If the other cat has already claimed the lone scratcher, your cat may have found your couch/carpet a suitable replacement.
Your cat commonly uses her scratcher, yet scratches the carpet or furniture when someone comes home.	Put a scratcher closer to the area- your cat may be so excited to see you or your family member that she needs to release her excitement yet wants to be near you.
You have provided a strong vertical or horizontal scratcher yet your cat continues to scratch furniture or carpeting.	Making the scratcher taller or longer- she may not getting the same relief from stretching on her scratcher that she does from the furniture/carpeting.
Your cat is using her scratchers yet still scratches your furniture and carpeting.	Using a combination of deterrents from scratching furniture/carpeting with a bit of retraining/behavior modification.
Your cat is chewing electronic cords.	Consider installing cord covers where necessary.

Remember, for every no, there must be a yes. If you want to tell your cat 'no, I don't want you doing this' you must also provide her with an appropriate solution. You need to be the problem solver.