

Top 10 Tips - How Do I Get My Cat to Use Their Scratching Post?

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In this article, I explain exactly how to get your cat to use their scratching post. All the best and most reliable tips are amalgamated into one place, right here.

It can be very frustrating when you go out and buy your cat a scratching post but they continue to scratch the furniture. "Why won't my cat use their scratching post!?" I hear you cry.

You can stop worrying now because I am here to share with you my top 10 tips on how to get your cat to use their scratching post and soon this dilemma will be a thing of the past.

At the same time as training your cat to use their scratching post, it may also be necessary to discourage and prevent them from scratching what they are not meant to. If you need help with this then I recommend that you also read my article on [how to stop your cat scratching the furniture or carpet](#), which provides useful tips on how to protect your home from sharp claws.

So... how do you encourage your cat to use their scratching post?

1. Start during kittenhood. Of course, this tip may be a little redundant for some, unless you have a time-machine, but it is best to introduce your cat to their scratching post while they are still a kitten, or as young as possible. It's much easier to teach a desirable behaviour from the beginning, rather than try to modify an undesirable behaviour later on. Since cats often stick with the same scratching object, when taking a new cat or kitten home it may also be a good idea to kindly ask to take the scratching post they are currently using as well, if it is appropriate to do so. It will also serve as a familiar object for them to have in their new home.

2. The correct height. One of the reasons cats like to scratch is so that they can stretch their spines. Make sure you get a tall scratching post that they can use to really reach up and stretch out on. If the scratching post is short and awkward they may not use it.

3. Make sure the post is secure. Is the scratching post sturdy or does it move around when they use it? Either secure the scratching post down, buy one with a

sturdy base or buy one that is large and heavy enough to not move when they use it. Not many cats will enjoy using a scratching post that doesn't offer them any resistance when they use it and just wobbles around.

4. Try different textures. You can buy scratching posts and pads made from different materials, such as:

- **Sisal rope**, with my favourite being the [SmartCat Ultimate Scratching Post](#)
- **Corrugated cardboard**, with my favourite being the [Catit Style Scratcher](#)
- **Carpet**, such as the [Classy Kitty Carpet Scratching Post](#)

Sisal and corrugated cardboard tend to be the most popular choices amongst the feline community. Some behaviourists also discourage using carpet posts as they believe it can be confusing for the cat. However, each circumstance is unique and every cat is an individual and will have their own personal preference. Perhaps your cat doesn't like the texture you have chosen for them and they would prefer to try something new.

5. Try different angles. Different cats prefer different angles. Some like to scratch and stretch out on a horizontal surface, some prefer to reach up on a vertical surface, while others prefer something in between. You can try:

- **Upright** posts, such as the [SmartCat Ultimate Scratching post](#)
- **Inclined** scratchers, such as the [Fat Cat Big Mama's Scratch & Play Ramp](#)
- **Flat** pads that you lay on the floor, such as the [Catit Style Scratcher](#)

6. Imitate what they are currently scratching. If you are not sure what scratching post your cat would prefer then try to imitate what they are currently choosing to scratch. Pay attention to what texture and angle they seem to prefer. If they like to scratch the carpet you could try a horizontal scratcher, or if they prefer to scratch the walls, you could try a vertical scratcher. The [SmartCat Bootsie's Scratcher](#) is a brilliant invention as it's angle can be varied according to your cat's preferences and either be laid flat on the floor or rested against the wall.

7. The '1 each plus 1' rule. For every cat you have in your home you should have one scratching post, then you should have an extra scratching post on top of that. Scratching is a way of cats marking their territory in order for them to feel secure. If there is only one post and it has already been marked by one of your cats, the others may not use it and will choose to mark other places in the house instead, such as your sofa.

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8. Placement is key. One of the reasons a cat scratches is because they are marking their territory, therefore don't hide scratching posts out of the way, not at first anyway. They need to be in more prominent locations so, for now, place them in the spots where they are currently choosing to scratch. You can move them somewhere more discrete once they are consistently using them. Also, do they have a spot where they like to nap? You can put a scratching post there too as cats often like to have a scratch when they wake up from a snooze. Another good location to try is next to the door that leads outside as it may be perceived as a territory boundary.

9. Make it a positive experience. When you introduce your cat to their new scratching post try placing delightful treats, such as [Friskies Party Mix](#), on and around it as well as rubbing irresistible catnip over it to peak their interest. You can get no-mess catnip spray formulations, such as [KONG Naturals Catnip Spray](#), and shower their scratcher in potent catnip oil.

You can also try using fishing-rod-type cat toys, such as the [Cat Charmer](#) or [Da Bird](#), to play with them on and around the scratching post. Encourage them to pounce on the toy so that their claws land on the post. They'll soon realise how good it feels to sink their claws into. Whenever they are using their scratching post tell them what a good kitty they are!

I also recommend using positive reinforcement and clicker training techniques to teach your cat to use their scratching post. Clicker training can be an easy, inexpensive and fun way to teach your cat to use their scratching post. It is also an excellent way to spend some bonding time with your cat. To learn how to clicker train your cat I recommend investing in a positive reinforcement behavior book, such as [Naughty No More by Marilyn Krieger](#).

10. Rub their paws on their scratching post. As long as doing so doesn't upset your cat, you can gently rub their paws on their post while giving them lots of praise. The main benefit of doing this is that it leaves some of the secretions from their paw scent glands on the post, which will hopefully encourage them to scratch it next time they get the scratching urge.

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