

# *Solving Your Top 5 Cat Behaviour Concerns*

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Paws On Your Heart

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Thank you for downloading our e-book. We have worked hard to find you the most informative and up to date information to help you with your cat behaviour concerns. We hope that you enjoy reading the e-book as much as we have enjoyed creating it. We have also included some incredible cat photographs in the e-book for you to enjoy.

Paws On Your Heart is a non-profit cat sanctuary from Saskatchewan, Canada. Our organization believes that all cats deserve to live a happy and healthy life, and we strive toward creating a positive image of feral and stray cats in society.

We would love to hear your cat stories. E-mail us your stories to [pawsonyourheart@gmail.com](mailto:pawsonyourheart@gmail.com).

Customer satisfaction is our number one priority, and we would love your feedback about this e-book, as well as your input about what feline topics we should cover next. We have created a short survey [HERE](#) for you to fill out if you would like to help us out with your feedback.

**Enjoy!**



## *A Special Relationship*

**T**he relationship that you have with your feline is very special, and should be nurtured at all times. It is important to remember that although the behaviour that cats demonstrate can be frustrating at times, they are not knowingly acting out of your best interest. Often times a cat will be completely unaware that the actions he or she is demonstrating are frowned upon.

Therefore, you must be able to teach Kitty what behaviour is acceptable, without resorting to negative reinforcement. Instead, try to understand why your cat does the things he or she does, and be able to make compromises with your cat to ensure a happy and healthy relationship for you both.



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# *Chapter 1: Scratching...*

## *Curtains, Carpets & Furniture*

*Are you afraid to purchase new furniture or home decor because your cat will scratch it to bits?*

**C**at scratching is one of the most concerning behaviours for cat owners. It is costly to repair shredded couches and rugs, and it is hard to control your feline friend from scratching when you are not in the room.

### ***What causes cats to scratch?***

The main reason that you will find a cat scratching is for grooming purposes. Scratching not only helps to sharpen a cat's claws, but also helps to remove the outer claw casing on the cat's nail.



Cats are able to stretch different muscles and tendons in their paws through scratching. In this way, scratching acts as a form of physical therapy for the cat.

Scratching also enables cats to mark their territory. Cats have scent glands in their paws, tails, and faces, and when cats scratch objects, they are putting their scent on the object as if to say 'this is mine'. This territorial scratching can also occur if a cat scratches in front of other cats. In this situation, the cat is trying to assert him or herself as the leader in the group.

Finally, scratching can be a form of attention grabbing behaviour. If a cat is feeling stressed, he or she may begin to scratch in new areas around the home. This attention grabbing behaviour is important to pay attention to, as this can be a sign of a larger problem with your cat's health.

Luckily, cat scratching is a problem that is easy to deter if you follow the right steps. Not all cats will respond the same to each deterrent, so it is best to test which option works best for Kitty before you decide to commit to just one option.



- ❖ **Give your cat plenty of toys to play with.** A cat that is entertained with toys will be less likely to take part in scratching due to boredom, and will instead spend time playing and scratching its new toys.
  
- ❖ **Spray your furniture with citrus scented spray.** Cats do not like the smell of citrus, and will avoid spending time in areas that smell like citrus.
  
- ❖ **Attach double sided tape or tinfoil to the targeted furniture.** The texture of tinfoil and sticky tape is very uncomfortable for cats to touch; therefore, cats are less likely to continue scratching an area that has these textures attached to them.
  
- ❖ **Purchase a scratching post or a cat tree.**  
Furniture made specifically for cats is an excellent alternative for them to scratch. All cats enjoy different surfaces for scratching, so make sure you know if your fur-baby prefers carpet, cardboard, or rope, before committing to an expensive piece of cat furniture. As well, note whether your cat prefers scratching on a horizontal surface, such as the



carpet, or a vertical surface, such as the side of the couch. Make sure the post is sturdy enough for a 10-15 pound cat to pull on and tall enough for an adult cat to reach out and stretch. This will help you to choose the best scratching furniture for your cat.

To ensure your feline friend uses the new scratching furniture, you can try the following steps to make the post more attractive:

- Place it in front, or on top of the previous scratching target. The cat may prefer scratching in this area, and will switch to using the new piece of furniture that is placed in the area.
- Make sure the post is in plain sight for Kitty, you do not want it to be too short or too tall so the cat does not notice it.
- Sprinkle the post with catnip.
- Cats like to scratch and stretch after naps, so place the furniture in the cat's favourite napping location.



- ❖ **Groom their nails often.** Ensuring that your cat's nails are always groomed reduces the risk of destructive scratching. If you begin trimming a feline's claws at an early age, they will become used to the grooming experience, and will be less resistant to have his or her claws clipped as an adult. You can even purchase pet claw clippers that are shaped specifically for your cat's nails, which makes it easier, and safer to trim them.
- ❖ **Attach plastic nail caps to your cat's nails.** Pet stores sell nail caps that can be placed over a cat's nails until the nails grow out and the caps fall off. These caps are rounded on the outside so that a cat cannot scratch anything while they are on its paws. The caps will last on a cat's nails for 1-2 months.

*It is important for us to note that we do not recommend [declawing](#) as a scratching deterrent, as declawing is painful and an inhumane process for any cat to undergo.*

By following the above steps, you can ensure that your feline friend will stop or redirect his or her scratching tendencies from your favourite furniture, to his or her new favourite toy or scratching post.



## *Chapter 2: Dashing Out The Door*

*How many times have you opened the house door, just for a split second to check the mailbox, and your cat has darted out the door?*

***Y**ou are not alone in your struggle to keep the cat indoors. Cats are attracted to the outdoors for the adventure of new smells, and the larger area to explore. Some cats that get a taste of the outdoors want to continue going outside, and will escape when they get the chance. Unfortunately, this causes many cats to become lost because they have dashed outside or escaped from the house without the knowledge of the owner.*



If you are struggling with a door-dashing cat, there are many ways to persuade Kitty to stay indoors. If you simply must take your cat outside, there are additional precautions that you can make to ensure the outdoor experience is safe.

*To prevent door dashing:*

- ❖ **Do not take your feline friend outside.** If your cat has never experienced the outdoors, do not tempt the cat by bringing it outside. The cat will be less likely to crave outdoor adventures if he or she has not been outside before.
- ❖ **Make the indoors more fun.** Kitty may be seeking outdoor fun because the indoors are boring and predictable for her. Add some excitement to the home environment with toys, cat furniture, and catnip. You can also bring the outdoors inside with a cat grass plant for her to smell, chew, and enjoy.



- ❖ **Distract the cat before you open the door.** Throw a toy or open a bag of treats right before you open the door. Your cat will be distracted by the option of food or play, which means that you can safely open the door without your furry friend dashing out.
- ❖ **Place a desk chair mat by the door.** Many desk chair mats are made of vinyl, which is an uncomfortable material for cats to walk on. Having the mat in front of the door will prevent the cat from attempting to run out of the door.
- ❖ **Cat proof your home.** Make sure any escape routes for the cat are secure. Ensure doors and windows are always closed, and that window and door screens are securely in place, with no rips or holes. As well, teach everyone in your home to check for the cat every time they open the door and leave the house. If everyone knows how to keep the cat safely indoors, there will be less of an opportunity for the cat to escape.



### *Outdoor Safety:*

- ❖ **Build an outdoor enclosure.** Cat enclosures come in all shapes and sizes to suit the need of cat owners. You can purchase a pre-built enclosure or build one yourself. These enclosures are safe, caged in areas that allow your cat to go outside, while staying safely in a specific area of the yard. You can even purchase tunnels that connect to windows allowing the cat to go inside and outside at its leisure.
- ❖ **Purchase a cat leash and harness.** To ensure that Kitty stays in a specific area of the yard, you can attach a short leash to a harness. The cat will only be able to explore the designated area of the yard, and will have little chance to escape. Please be aware, that some cats can wriggle out of collars and harnesses, and that you should never leave them completely unattended as this can result in a lost cat.

Ensuring that your furry friend stays safely indoors is the best measure to avoid him or her from dashing out into the world. If you must take your cat outdoors, make sure to take the proper precautions to create a safe environment outside.



## *Chapter 3: Jumping On... Countertops, Shelves & Tables*

*"Crash! Bang! Boom!"*

*Does your cat startle you during the day by knocking things off high shelves, tables, and the kitchen counters?*

Cats love the thrill of being in a high location. Being up high allows them to explore the area, and feel like the King or Queen of their surroundings. This excitement causes cats to climb everything from the trees outside, to your living room mantel. Unfortunately, this climbing behaviour can be very concerning for a cat owner, especially if it results in objects being broken, or the cat harming itself.



## ***Countertop Dangers...***

The most dangerous place for a cat to explore is the kitchen counter. Often cats jump onto the counter because there is easy access to running water and food in this location. Cats are attracted to food that is left on the counter, and even traces of food left on dishes in the sink. As well, when a cat notices that there is a sink on the counter, they may begin the bad habit of jumping onto the counter to receive fresh water from the sink.

Although some cat owners are not concerned about their cat walking on the counter, there are still many dangers in the kitchen area. The two most dangerous aspects of a kitchen counter are *sharp objects in the sink*, and the threat of a *hot stovetop*. Cats can easily cut themselves on knives left in the sink by licking excess food off of a dirty knife or if the cat falls into the sink. For this reason, it is best to ensure that dishes are never left in the sink or on the counter. As well, cats do not know that stovetops can be hot, and although Kitty may have safely walked on the stove when it was not turned on, she may make the mistake of walking on the stove when it is turned on, meaning that she could drastically burn herself.



## ***How can you deter your feline friend from jumping onto these high places?***

- ❖ **Make the kitchen counter clean and boring.** If there is nothing on the counter for the cat to play with or eat, the cat will not be tempted to explore the area. Clear food from the area, do not leave dishes in the sink, and when you are cleaning the counters use a citrus-based cleaner. Cats will avoid areas that are scented with a citrus scent, and will be less likely to jump onto the counters.
- ❖ **Buy a cat tree or window perch.** If your cat is climbing these high areas to look out of a window, you can place cat furniture near the window for your cat to use. Not only does this ensure that your furniture is cat-safe, but it also creates a special area for your furry friend to enjoy.
- ❖ **Put double-sided tape or tinfoil on the edge of the counter or shelf.** Similar to deterring a cat from scratching furniture, they dislike the feeling of these materials on their paws, and will no longer be interested in jumping onto surfaces coated with tape or tinfoil.



- ❖ **"Booby Trap" the area.** Place cookie sheets or a noisy object on the edge of the high surface. The cat will jump onto the area and be startled by the loud noise, causing the cat to avoid the area. This technique should not harm your cat, and because you are not present when the loud noise occurs, Kitty will associate the loud noise with the area, and not with you.
- ❖ **Make a loud noise.** Monitor your fur-baby's actions, and when you notice he or she is about to jump onto a high surface, clap loudly, shake a can full of pennies, or shout "no". Cats do not like loud noises and will begin to associate the area with loud noises. It is important to note that this may be the least successful of the deterrents, as the cat may still jump onto the areas when you are not at home.

Once your cat keeps all four paws on the ground, instead of on your living room mantle, you can feel assured that your breakable objects are safe, and most importantly that your favourite feline is safe.



## *Chapter 4: Litter Box Troubles...*

*When was the last time you had to clean up an unsightly accident left by your furry friend?*

Every cat owner has experience with this behaviour, whether we like it or not. Although it is frustrating to clean up urine and feces left around the house, often times the reason for this behaviour has more meaning than just being an 'accident'.

The first thing that you should consider is a medical condition. Has Kitty been drinking excess amounts of water? Is there blood in your cat's urine? Several medical issues can cause a cat to urinate outside of the litter box. You should always take your feline friend to the veterinarian when he or she demonstrates inappropriate elimination behaviour, especially if you can rule out other reasons for the behaviour (such as the ones listed on the next page).



If you know that your cat is not feeling ill, the following scenarios may narrow down what is causing the litter box issues.

❖ **Dirty litter box.** *How often do you clean your cat's litter tray?*

The litter should be cleaned every day to make the litter box inviting for Kitty. You do not enjoy using smelly or dirty bathrooms, and neither do cats. In addition, if you have multiple cats, make sure you have a litter tray for each cat. The rule is to have a litter tray for each cat, plus one, to ensure each cat is happy and comfortable using at least one litter box.

❖ **Type of litter.** *What type of litter is in the litter box?*

Different cats like different forms of litter, and the litter that you are using may not be the choice of your cat. If you are currently using clumping litter, try changing to non-clumping (or vice versa) to see if one litter type is preferred over the other.



❖ **Type of litter tray.** *Does the litter tray have a lid?*

As with litter, cats are particular about their litter tray, and some cats prefer trays with a lid, while others prefer using trays that are uncovered. Luckily, if you have a lidded litter tray the top snaps off, so you can easily leave the lid off if your cat prefers.

❖ **Litter box location.** *Where is the litter box located?*

Cats like to have secluded, relaxing areas to do their business. If the litter box is in a busy or noisy area, your furry friend may be scared or reluctant to use it.

❖ **Strangers in the house.** *Have there been strange people or animals in the house?*

Cats are territorial, and may become frightened if there is a strange or new presence in the house. If the cat must pass strange people or animals to get to its litter box, he or she may avoid the area completely, and end up urinating or defecating elsewhere. In addition, a cat may have a difficult time relaxing with strangers in the home, which can again result in inappropriate elimination.



❖ **Stress.** *Has something changed in the home recently?*

Cats are very sensitive to even the smallest change in the home, which can cause them to become stressed out. Some examples of stressful changes include moving homes, the litter box being moved, a new baby, furniture that has been changed around, and strangers in the home. Keep an eye on your cat's behaviour when your home undergoes changes to make sure he or she does not react negatively to the changes.

❖ **Marking or spraying.** *Has Kitty been urinating on vertical surfaces?*

Spraying is a form of communication for cats, as it marks the cat's territory, and can attract potential mates. Cats that are marking their territory with urine tend to spray the urine on vertical surfaces such as walls or couches. In addition, cats that have not been spayed or neutered will tend to spray around the home due to hormonal fluctuations.



Now that you understand the cause of these litter box problems, here are some suggestions to reduce this inappropriate behaviour in the future.

- ❖ **Clean the house thoroughly** to remove any odours that have been left behind by your cat. Use an enzyme cleaner to eliminate the smell, and do not use an ammonia cleaner as this mimics the scent of cat urine, which will continue to attract your cat to the area.
- ❖ **Make the current target area for elimination less appealing.** Spray the area with a citrus spray, or place tinfoil or double sided tape in the area. These tried and true deterrents will ensure the area is no longer used as a bathroom location.
- ❖ **Clean the litter box every day,** and change the entire litter pan every two weeks. Wash the litter tray with soap and water to make sure the pan is squeaky clean for your feline.



❖ **Notice if Kitty prefers to eliminate on a specific texture.** Although it may seem like a finicky task to accommodate to your cat's preferences, it can save you some sanity from cleaning up accidents around the home.

- If the bathtub is the main target, your feline friend may prefer toileting on a smooth surface. You can accommodate this preference by only filling the litter tray with litter on one side, while leaving the other side empty.
- If your cat prefers urinating in your plants or outside in the garden, you can add dirt to the litter box to make the litter more outdoorsy.
- Finally, if the carpet or soft surfaces (such as clothes) are the main target, try adding shredded newspapers to the litter to make it more comfortable for Kitty.



❖ **Place the tray where the cat has been eliminating.**

You do not want to move the litter tray around too much, however, if your fur-baby has been eliminating consistently in the same place you can put the litter tray in that location. This will help to get the cat used to the box, and you can slowly begin moving the tray in this area to a more desirable location (for you). It is important to emphasize how slowly you must move the tray; it could be a few inches a day, to a foot a day depending on your cat.

❖ **Purchase a new tray.** This is especially helpful if you have multiple cats in the home to make sure each cat has his or her own box.

❖ **Put the tray in a quiet area** that is not near any loud appliances or busy areas in the home.

The process for eliminating this behaviour can be time consuming, though it is well worth it in the end. Not only will you be happily living in a clean and comfortable home, but you will know that your cat is happy and healthy living in your home too.



## *Chapter 5: Houseplant Mischief*

*When was the last time that you came home to a guilty cat who has clearly been into your houseplants?*

*You* know the signs... dirt tracked through the house, torn leaves, and most dreaded of all, the scent of urine in the plant's dirt.

Not only is this behaviour quite frustrating for you, but it can also be deadly for cats. Many plants can be fatal for cats to ingest, which is why it is best to research the plants that you bring home to make sure that they are cat approved. The ASPCA has a very helpful [list of plants](#) that are toxic and non-toxic to cats, so if you are unsure about the plants in your home, you can check there first.



## ***Why do cats target the plants in your home?***

Cats eat houseplants because they are attempting to clear out their digestive tracts. When cats ingest these plants, they are able to relieve indigestion or an upset stomach. This is the same reason that cats eat grass when they go outside.

A cat that urinates in a houseplant may be doing so because he or she prefers the soft soil rather than the litter in the litter tray. Many outdoor cats prefer using dirt as their toilet, which is why dirt that is brought indoors can be irresistible for a cat to use. If this is the case with your cat, try mixing soil with his litter to distract him from your houseplants.

Although the most obvious remedy for deterring this behaviour is to remove houseplants completely from the home, those who have a green thumb may find this to be an extreme consequence. For people who cannot remove plants from their home, there are several options to deter a cat from the houseplants.



- ❖ **Remove the plants from Kitty's sight.** Place your plants in a room that is blocked off from your cat, or in a hanging basket well out of the cat's reach.
- ❖ **Purchase your furry friend a plant of his or her own.** Cat grass, catnip, and catmint not only attract cats directly to them, but they are safe alternatives for cats to chew.
- ❖ **Spray your plant with bitter apple or bitter orange spray.** Cats hate the taste and smell of these sprays, so they are unlikely to approach a plant that has been sprayed with this smell. You can purchase spray that is made specifically for plants, so you do not have to worry about harming your plant in the process.
- ❖ **Add a small amount of eucalyptus to the soil.** You can use either eucalyptus leaves or eucalyptus essential oil. Cats do not like the smell, and will avoid digging in the soil if it smells like eucalyptus.



- ❖ **Bury the rinds of citrus fruits in the soil.** This is very effective, as cats highly dislike citrus scents. The rinds must be fresh, however, so you will have to add new rinds to the soil quite often.
- ❖ **Mix vinegar into soil that has already been urinated in.** This will eliminate the smell of the urine in the plant's soil.
- ❖ **Place gravel, pinecones, or aluminum into the soil.** Cats do not like the texture of these items on their paws, and will avoid digging or walking in the plant's soil.
- ❖ **Cover the soil with fly screen or netting.** This will create a barrier between the cat and the soil, which will stop the cat from digging in the plant.

Not only will the use of one or more of these options help to deter your cat from chewing, digging, or urinating in your houseplants, it will also ensure your sanity, and your feline friend's security.



We hope you have enjoyed this e-book!

Customer satisfaction is our number one priority, and we would love your feedback about this e-book, as well as your input about what feline topics we should cover next. We have created a short survey [HERE](#) for you to fill out if you would like to help us out with your feedback.

You can also leave your feedback in the comments section on the page where you downloaded this e-book.

We would also love to hear your cat stories. E-mail us your cat stories to [pawsonyourheart@gmail.com](mailto:pawsonyourheart@gmail.com).



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