

A black and white photograph of a kitten looking up at a scratching post. The kitten is positioned to the right of the post, looking up at it with wide eyes. The post is a thick, textured cylinder. The background is a light, textured surface.

The perfect scratching post

Your feline friend deserves the best, right? That means his claws do too. Here's all you need to know to create the perfect environment for cat-scratching heaven.

Scratching is a normal behavior, and you should encourage it by creating places where you and your cat are both satisfied. That's why having the perfect scratching post is so important.

Cats need to be able to stretch to full height when they scratch. So look for a scratching post that is taller than your cat's length when he's stretched out. Commercial scratching posts tend to be made of sisal, but they can be made of wood, carpet or sisal textile material glued to wood.

Some cats like to scratch horizontally, too. Corrugated cardboard and scratch pads may help protect the carpeting. Always attach any scratcher to a heavy piece of wood. Stability is a really important factor—any scratcher that wobbles might be startling and may cause your cat to avoid the object. Make sure that the scratcher has a large and heavy enough base or is

secured to floor or wall so it offers plenty of resistance to enthusiastic claws.

The scratching surfaces need to be positioned in the most appealing places to scratch within the home. If the cat has already selected a location to scratch, move the scratching post to that location. Marking here may have some significance to your kitty, and you want to encourage your cat to scratch on the post—instead of your carpet or furniture.

Notice your cat's regular routes through the house and place scratching posts there. Some cats like to scratch first thing in the morning, on waking up. A scratching post near the sleeping place will be welcome.

Finally, remember to reward appropriate scratching with treats if you are trying to lure the cat to a particular site. Cats attracted by catnip may find that desirable.

Scratch that!

Use these tips to pick an appropriate scratching post to satisfy your cat's itch to scratch.

Pick the right post. Think about the places your cat scratches now. What's her preferred material? Scout out posts and coverings that mimic her favorite scratching surfaces, from sisal to cardboard to carpet-covered posts or even wood or leather.

Structure matters. Does your kitty crave vertical scratching surfaces or horizontal ones? Some cats will enjoy a mix of both.

How high? Does your cat stretch high and far above his head? He might like higher posts. Just be sure it's sturdy so it won't wobble, wobble or fall while you're cat's soothing his scratching urge.

Location matters. Just like real estate, where you place your scratching board counts. Your kitty craves your attention, so it's best to post her post in highly trafficked areas, where the family spends time together. This way her kitty "furniture" is on the scene, close to you—the one she loves best!

