Cat Scratching, Clawing and Rubbing Behavior



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In the wild, most big cats are naturally dependent upon themselves and not a pack for survival. Your kitten is no different.

If you have a cat at home, you’re no stranger to the endless shenanigans these furballs are capable of. And one of the most common forms of naughtiness you can witness as a cat parent is scratching furniture and other stuff found around the household. It is a common complaint of cat owners that my cat keeps meowing and rubbing against everything. Though it might look very impolite on your pet's part, it is one of the natural urges of cats. They have practical reasons for scratching stuff.

Why do cats scratch stuff?

Cats usually leave their mark by scratching on surfaces, and if you own a cat, watching your cat scratch furniture by dragging its front claws downward is often a common sight to behold. And this is a fairly common practice for felines, and there can be several reasons for which your cat is scratching up furniture around the household. If you are wondering why my cat keeps meowing and rubbing against everything, here are the reasons:

- **Maintain nails:**

  One of the primary reasons that can cause your cat to scratch furniture is for maintaining their nails. Cats as predators have claws which require sharpening. By scratching, your cat ensures the outer husk of the claw has been loosened, allowing it to remove the outer husk and reveal the sharper claw surface that lies underneath. The process of scratching furniture as a way of sharpening the claw is also known as stropping. Therefore, maintaining nails is a primary reason why do cats scratch.

- **Condition paw muscles:**

  Cats are hunters and are fairly known for their predatory skills, which include tracking and hunting down prey. Scratching on surfaces profusely allows cats to hone their hunting skills by exercising the muscles across their forelimbs and spine. This helps cats retain and improve their hunting posture. Some cats also lie down and pull their body weight as a manner of scratching for the same reason.

- **Marking territory:**

  Cats are social animals that are used to mark their territory from other cats, as well as to ward off predators. So, most cats mark their territory by scratching against surfaces as strong visual cues, especially in areas with a higher cat population.

- **Leaving scent signals:**

  Other than marking their territory, cats also scratch surfaces that leave behind scent signals as a form of marking behaviour or territorial communication. Cats have scent and sweat glands between the pads of their paws which produce a strong, yet distinct smell. By dragging down their paws on surfaces while scratching, cats ensure their scent is deposited onto the surface. In addition to the smell, the claw marks and claw husks are used as a combination to display ownership and ward off other cats.

Why do cats rub against stuff?

As fascinating as cats are, cat rubbing themselves against loved ones and furniture is one of the common forms of interaction in cats. Have you ever wondered why do cats rub against your legs? For the feline friends, head-butting and nuzzling suggest a wide range of interactions, including greeting, claiming ownership, and gathering information. The other reasons why your cat might be rubbing against stuff are:

- **Confirming social bond with humans:**

  It is not uncommon to see your cat rub against furniture and other household stuff. Most cats love to rub against their favourite humans. While they look extremely adorable the action is actually an expression of love and affection. It is a complex social interaction for furry little munchkins. Most cats rub against stuff and favourite humans with their forehead and cheeks, and it is their way of claiming ownership and possession of loved ones. If you witness your cat keeps meowing and rubbing against everything.

- **Leaving scent signals:**

  Other than being a gesture of confirming social bonds with humans, cats also rub themselves against stuff to leave scent signals for competitors. These furry munchkins transfer their scent from the gland present on their face and cheeks, and by rubbing their head and tail along furniture or along with their owners, cats deposit their scent to claim possession and belongingness. The scent signals, mostly containing pheromones, are also used for identification and for attracting potential mates. So if your cat keeps meowing and rubbing against everything including you, it might be a gesture for the immense affection that it has for you.

How to stop your cat from scratching and ruining furniture?

If you are certain why do cats scratch, here are some ways by which you can

- **Buy scratching posts:**

  One of the most effective ways of getting your furry little friend to stop scratching and ruining furniture is by purchasing a scratching post for them. This encourages your cat to resume its natural activity of scratching without causing damage to your furniture or other household commodities. A cat scratching post is usually available as a single upright structure that encourages your cat to interact and play with. Most scratching posts are available as a wooden post that has been covered with rough material and provide an acceptable place for scratching. Scratching posts are usually extremely affordable, and readily available in most pet supply stores.

- **Spray citrus on furniture:**

  You can also stop your cat clawing furniture by spraying it with citrus. Usually, lemon juice effectively serves in deterring cats from sitting or scratching a surface. And if you would like to keep your furry little friend from scratching furniture without causing it any harm, a DIY homemade cat repellant spray with citrus juice is sufficient. They are extremely easy to make and are safer than industrial-grade cat repellents which might be toxic to your cat if ingested. You can prepare your cat repellent spray from scratch with lemon essential oil, rosemary oil, vegetable glycerine and distilled water and spray it on the surface of your furniture.

- **Put catnip on scratching posts:**

  If you already have a cat scratching post but your fur kid still prefers scratching on your furniture, using catnip on the scratching post you've bought can be a great idea to allure them to the scratching post. Cats love catnip, so putting catnip on a scratching post can play a good role in getting them to stop scratching furniture and use the scratching post instead.

In addition, you can also stop your cat scratching and ruining furniture by trimming its claws periodically. This is also beneficial as it prevents your cat from accidentally scratching you. Furthermore, it also helps your cat to avoid bacterial build-up between the claws which

might lead to infection. Trimming your cat's nails is also a vital part of their grooming. Though not all cats are comfortable getting their claws trimmed, you can get your munchkin accustomed to trimming from an early age. However, if your cat enjoys going on outdoor adventures, it might be a better idea to avoid declawing and leave their claws be, as your cat can be dependent on them for defence against other creatures, as well as for climbing.

Cat Scratching and Rubbing FAQs

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1. **Why does my cat knead blankets?**

   Wondering why do cats knead blankets? They knead blanket as a habit from their kittenhood when they kneaded their mother’s belly while nursing. It is a sign of contentment and relaxation. They also do it for nesting, i.e., preparing a place to sleep in just like humans fluff up their pillows.

2. **What is Cat making biscuits?**

   Cat making biscuits is when cats ‘knead’ on soft objects like a blanket or on their human’s lap to show contentment, love and affection. They push one paw after another rhythmically, which resembles kneading dough and hence the behaviour is known as cat making biscuits.

3. **Is cat kneading a sign of affection?**

   While it might not be the most comfortable way for you but your cat is showing you love and affection by kneading on you. Also known as cat making biscuits since they way it resembles kneading dough, cats knead only when they are content and relaxed.

4. **What do cat tail flicks mean?**

   To know the language of the cat from the tail, observe the frequency of the flick or the cat tail positions. A rigid back and forth means the cat is focusing on something, most likely on prey. Flicking and thumping the tail indicates a high level of stress and agitation. An upright tail means your fur baby is asking for some love.

5. **Why does my cat hit me with her tail?**

   Sometimes it is difficult to know the language of the tailed cat. It can be a gesture of fondness, or excitement. It can also mean slight frustration. But mostly it is a positive sign.

6. **Why does my cat's tail move when I pet her?**

   If you are petting your cat, and in return, they move their tail slightly, it means they are feeling secure. Your cat feels safe in your presence, and if you wish, you may continue with your petting. In this way, you will know the cat language through the tail.

7. **Do cats wag their tails like dogs when they are happy?**

   Dogs generally wag their tails when they are happy, satisfied, or excited. However, for cats, the same does not apply. The trick to knowing is a thorough observation of its movement. The cat can thump its tail, swish it, etc., and each has a different message.

8. **What stresses out a cat?**

   Some of the most common causes of stress in cats are:
   Change in routines
   Home relocation
   New member in the family
   Loud noises
   Vet visits
   Getting bullied by other animals

9. **Do cats purr when they are stressed?**

   Indeed, they do, since purring is not just a way of communicating contentment, affection, and happiness, but it is also a self-soothing technique. So yes, a stressed kitten might also purr.

10. **Does petting a cat relieve stress?**

    While petting a cat will relieve your stress, the same cannot be said for your furry baby. Of course, if your fur kid wants to curl up to you when stressed, give her all the cuddles, but usually, a stressed cat would like to be left alone and hide in a safe place when stressed.

11. **What can I give my cat to reduce stress?**

    You can use stress relief products such as calming collars, pheromone diffusers, and thundershirts to calm your fur baby. Or you can also offer calming cat food and treats and use play as a distraction. If nothing works and the signs of stress in cats continues for long, take your furry to see a vet.

12. **Why does my cat rub against my legs when I walk?**

    If you are wondering why do cats rub against your legs, this article aims at explaining this behaviour. It is common for cats to rub against the legs of loved ones. Though it mostly signifies love and affection, it is a complex social interaction for cats. By

rubbing against the legs of their favourite humans, cats leave scent signals to claim possession and belongingness, as well as for greetings and identification. Therefore, the next time you wonder why the cat rubbing head on me, remember to shower it with all the love and affection.

13. **Can cats be trained not to scratch furniture?**

Cat clawing is one of the natural urges in cats, which not just helps in marking territory or sharpening claws, but for relieves stress and feeling good. If trained from a young age, cats can get accustomed to not scratching furniture.

14. **Why is my cat scratching the furniture?**

One of the primary reasons behind a cat scratching the furniture is to maintain and sharpen their claws. However, in addition, cats scratch furniture to condition paw muscles, relieve stress, stretch, as well as to mark territories and leave scent signals. Scent signals, combined with claw husks and scratches are strong visual cues for other cats.

15. **How can I get my cat to stop scratching the couch?**

If you want to avoid your cat clawing the couch, you can purchase a scratching post for them to use instead. Using a citrus spray is also effective as a cat repellent to keep them off furniture. In addition, you can also trim their claws to make sure they stop scratching couches. However, if your cat ventures outdoors, it is better to use homemade cat repellent sprays than to have them declawed.

16. **Why is my kitten meowing at night?**

Most cats are nocturnal in nature, meaning they are more active at night. Though most domestic cats grow acquainted with the timing followed by their owners, some cats show natural tendencies of being more active during the night. Kitten meowing is a common practice for cats of all ages. However, if your kitten meowing is particularly at night, it might mean your little furball is feeling bored, and wants to go out. Similarly, if your kitten keeps meowing at night, it might be distressed for some reason.

17. **Why do kittens chirrup?**

Chirrups, or chirping sounds are commonly made by cats and kittens alike. Mother cats often use chirping sounds or trills to gesture their kittens to follow her. By imitating the chirping kitten sound, your kitten might want you to accompany or follow it.

18. **Why is my kitten making weird noises?**

If your kitten keeps meowing or making weird kitten sounds like yowls for longer periods of time, it is usually indicative that your kitten is upset with something, or is experiencing distress and anxiety. You can help your kitten to calm down by gently holding it, stroking its head and under the chin, as well as by providing it with its favourite treats and toys.

19. **What do different kitten noises mean?**

Kittens are social creatures which often use kitten sounds to interact with other cats, as well as their owners. Depending on the type of sound produced, its vocalization and tone, kittens can mean several things. Paying close attention to these noises can help you understand your kitten better and interpret what it is trying to communicate.

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