



Did you know...

- Scratching is an instinctive behavior whereby cats mark their territory with the scent glands in their feet.
- Claws are essential to cats' ability to run, jump and climb.
- Declawing is illegal in parts of Europe, and there is a push to outlaw it in the United States.
- You can't stop your cat from scratching, but you can provide an appropriate place to scratch, such as a sisal (rope) covered scratching post or block of wood.
- Frequent nail trimming eliminates the sharp point, taking away the cat's ability to destroy carpeting, furniture and curtains.
- Young cats' nails should be trimmed often—at least once a week. As cats mature, their nails thicken and growth slows.
- Soft Paws (www.softpaws.com) are vinyl caps that cover the claws, making it impossible for kitty to scratch. They stay on for approximately 4 to 6 weeks at a time.

Benefits of Trimming Cats' Nails

In addition to preventing damage from unwanted scratching, trimming your cat's nails can provide some positive benefits.

Once the nails are trimmed and blunt, it actually decreases the frequency of the urge to scratch. As the nails grow back, kitty will feel the urge to scratch and sharpen them. If you see your cat start to scratch again, take that as a sign that the nails are getting long and need to be trimmed.

Untrimmed nails can actually curl around and literally grow back into the pad of the foot. Similar to an ingrown nail on a human, this causes significant discomfort and requires veterinary attention. Prevent this problem by trimming your cat's nails regularly.

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Alternatives to Declawing Your Cat



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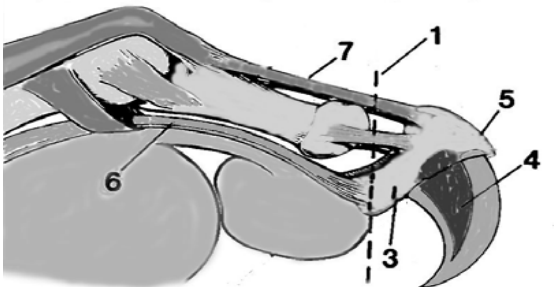


The Truth about Declawing

Declawing is the permanent surgical amputation of the cat's toes at the first joint. In order to prevent the nail from regrowing, the toe must be removed above the nail bed.

Declawing is a painful procedure that can leave the cat with a lifetime of problems. This surgery, while done under general anesthesia, leaves the cat in excruciating pain for several weeks. Bone spur re-growth often

Onychectomy: "Declawing" - Feline Digital Amputation



1. Line of Amputation; 3. Third Phalanx; 4. Unguis Process; 5. Unguis Crest; 6. Flexor Tendon; 7. Dorsal Ligaments - are all severed and amputated in the declawing surgery. Declawing involves 10 separate and painful amputations.

Adapted from: Textbook of Small Animal Surgery 2nd ed. Slatter D, W.B. Saunders Co.

occurs at the surgery site causing permanent draining wounds and infections requiring further surgery.

Having removed a portion of the toe, the cat now has smaller, less functional feet, making it unable to run and play as well as before. These smaller, sensitive toes may cause pain when walking and digging in the litter box, thus making the cat less likely to use the litter box.

How to trim a cat's nails

1. **Gather your tools!** Whether you choose to purchase special, rounded pet nail scissors or use regular human nail clippers, be sure you have a sharp blade. Dull blades may hurt your pet and cause the nail to split or bleed.
2. **Get a grip!** Depending on your cat's personality, you may need to try a variety of different holds until you've found one that makes your cat feel secure. It's best to start with just petting and holding the cat's paws before you're ready to try trimming, to get the cat used to the feeling. You may want to ask someone to help you, so one person can concentrate on holding the cat, while the other does the clipping.



3. **Ready, set, trim!** Hold one paw in your hand and gently press down on the joint just above the claws to extend the claw. Observe the pink and clear areas of the claws. As you snip, don't get too close to the pink area (called the quick) or kitty will start to bleed. Just trim off a little the first time. As you become more comfortable, you can learn to take off the entire hook, leaving the quick intact.

Training your cat to use a scratching post

Since scratching is an instinctive behavior for cats, you will never be able to completely eliminate it from their routines. But, providing an appropriate place to scratch, such as a scratching post, carpet square or block of wood, will help to eliminate the headaches and damage caused by inappropriate scratching.

Train your cat about proper and improper scratching. When you catch kitty going after your furniture or drapes, make a sudden noise or give them a little squirt from a water bottle. Be consistent and let kitty know that it's not an OK place to scratch.

Try rubbing some catnip on the scratching post, and be sure to praise kitty when he uses it. You may have to demonstrate it for him the first few times by picking up his front paws and making the scratching movement. Before long, kitty will get the hang of it and you both will be very happy with your decision not to declaw.

