



ARIZONA HUMANE SOCIETY

Improving the Lives of Animals Since 1957

PET TRAINING: REDIRECTING YOUR CAT'S UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOR

DETERMINING AN EFFECTIVE REDIRECTION of your cat's undesirable behavior is definitely a case of trial-and-error, as individual preferences will vary with each cat. This is often the best method to discourage a cat from a particular action or place, but will seldom work effectively without offering an alternative that is both convenient and rewarding. Following are a few ideas to deter your cat from damaging your floor or furniture or from venturing into places that you prefer she would not. We will discuss the use of a number of "aversives" or deterrents such as Texture, Smell, Taste and a few surprises that will help deter your cat from undesirable behavior.

Texture

There are a number of materials that may be used to keep your cat from jumping onto furniture or countertops. To protect your furniture or other items from sticky substances, attach the aversives to a piece of foil or heavy plastic and secure that with weights or light tape.

Indoor Aversives:

- Shelf paper (sticky side up)
- Double-sided carpet tape
- Heavy foil

Outdoor Aversives:

- Irregular or sharp rocks firmly set into dirt
- Chicken wire firmly set into dirt (sharp edges rolled under)

Indoor & Outdoor Aversive:

- Heavy plastic carpet runner (pointed side up)

Smell

Soak cotton balls, rags or washcloths in one of the "stinky" substances listed below. To help protect carpets, upholstery, floors or furniture, place the saturated object on a piece of weighted foil or heavy plastic. To prevent the substance from seeping into the ground, use the same precautions. Outdoor substances need to be reapplied daily, due to more rapid dissipation into the air.

Indoors & Outdoor Aversives:

- **NON-TOXIC** Insect repellent, especially those containing citronella and/or citrus odors (**ALWAYS CHECK FOR TOXICITY** - if safe for young children, it's generally safe for pets; **CHECK WITH YOUR VET TO BE SURE!**)
- Citric odors - colognes, concentrated juices or fresh peels
- Annoying colognes
- Some NON-TOXIC muscle rubs (NOTE: some cats react to menthol as they do to catnip - beware!)
- Aloe gel
- Cayenne Pepper

Taste

Some of these substances may damage furniture or floor finishes, so be sure to test them in a hidden location before widespread use. Except for hot sauce and cayenne pepper, these substances should be safe to apply to most people's skin; however, some individuals may be sensitive to them.

- Bitter Apple or similar sprays and gels marketed specifically for taste aversion
- **NON-TOXIC** Insect repellents, especially those containing citronella or citrus odors (**ALWAYS CHECK FOR TOXICITY**, if it's safe for young children, it's generally safe for pets; **CHECK WITH YOUR VET TO BE SURE!**)
- Some hot sauces
- Cayenne pepper
- Some NON-TOXIC muscle rubs
- Citric odors (colognes, concentrated juices or fresh peels)
- Aloe gel

Surprise!

Remote Controlled Aversives:

- Motion detector that reacts with a startling sound
- Snappy Trainer (upside-down mouse trap that's **securely taped under paper** to avoid contact)
- Aluminum pie plate containing water, beans or pebbles -- preferably balanced precariously on a counter or other undesirable "jumping" surface. Do not use in the pie plate that is toxic which could be ingested by your cat.
- Scat Mat (very slight electrical shock)

Human Controlled Aversives:

- Use these to get your cat's attention, and thereby offer an appropriate alternative.
- Spray bottle or squirt gun filled with water or a combination of water and vinegar (NOTE: avoid the super-duper water guns that have a very forceful spray)
- Loud air horn
- Whistle
- Shaker can (soda can containing nails, pennies, beans or pebbles - securely taped shut)

WARNING: For fearful cats, try everything else before trying surprise techniques, especially those using noises!

For more information, please visit
www.azhumane.org

*Adapted from material originally developed by applied animal behaviorists at the Dumb Friends League, Denver, Colorado
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