

Aversives for Cats

An aversive stimulus is something that evokes a negative association for your cat to discourage undesirable behavior. Determining an effective aversive reaction for your cat 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.



Texture

You may need to weight the material firmly or tape it in order for it to stay put. To protect furniture or floor finish from sticky substances, attach them to a piece of foil or heavy plastic and secure that with weights or light tape.

Indoors:

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

Outdoors:

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

Both:

- Heavy plastic carpet runner (pointed side up)

Smell

Soak cotton balls, rags or washcloths in the "stinky" substance. 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 quicker dissipation into the air.

Indoors or Outdoors:

- Insect repellent, especially those containing citronella and/or citrus odors (check for toxicity - if safe for young children, it's generally safe for pets)

- Citric odors - colognes, concentrated juices or fresh peels
- Strong colognes
- Some muscle rubs (NOTE: some cats react to menthol as they do to catnip - beware!)
- Aloe gel

Taste

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

- Bitter apple or similar sprays and gels marketed specifically for taste aversion
- Insect repellents, especially those containing citronella or citrus odors (check for toxicity, if it's safe for young children, it's generally safe for pets)
- Some hot sauces
- Cayenne pepper
- Some 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
- 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!**