

Cat: Claw Clipping

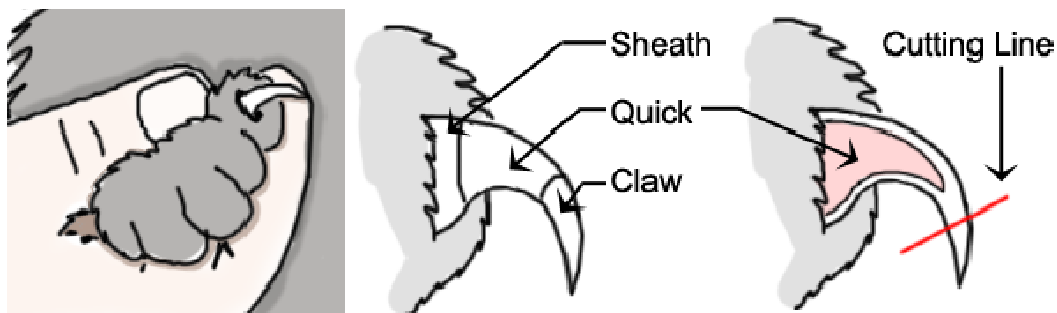


Indoor cats even with access to a scratching post need to have their claws clipped occasionally, some might need it as frequent as every few months. Cats will scratch for a variety of reasons, and it is an important natural behavior of a cat's. Scratching marks the territory, helps the cat stretch, and in some cases relieves anxiety and stress. By scratching the cat removes the "dead" layers of the nails, thus making the nail thinner and sharper. Nails that have not been trimmed for a long time may grow in a circular shape causing the sharp tip to grow into the cat's paw pad. In older cats the nails often become thick and hard, which can lead to pain or even lameness. Providing an appropriate scratching surface and checking the nails regularly is essential to meeting the basic health and behavioral needs of your cat.

By trimming your cat's nails regularly you can reduce the amount of damage the claws do. Follow the steps below to help you with this process.

How to Do It

- Check the cat's paws for dirt; although they usually keep their own feet clean, you will want to be able to see the claw clearly. You can extend the cat's nail by picking up the cat's foot and gently applying a little pressure on the top and bottom of the toe just behind the nail.
- Make sure there is enough light. Be sure you can see the whole nail; you may need to pull back fur if your cat has long hair.
- Keep the clippers perpendicular to the nail. Look for the "quick" in the cat's nail. The quick is a vein. You can see it as the pinkish area inside the nail. Notice how far into the nail the quick extends. The clipper is best placed about 1/8 inch before the quick.



If You Trim the Nail Too Close

Be aware not to trim too close to the quick. If you do your cat may pull away from you, meow, hiss, or even try to bite you. You may observe a small bit of blood on the end of the nail. Wipe the blood away with a tissue or paper towel. Dab some flour or styptic powder on the tip to stop the bleeding. You can find these products at the drug store or at a pet shop. In the future, do not cut the nails so close to the quick.

Cat: Claw Clipping *(continued)*

Tips

- Handle your cat's paws regularly: while your cat is relaxed gently touch and massage the paws on a regular basis. At first you will touch and massage each paw briefly, then as time goes on your massages can lengthen and the pressure you apply can also increase. Your cat will then be prepared at claw clipping time.
- Ask someone to help you; it is much easier than trying to hold a struggling cat and handle the nail clippers simultaneously. Have your helper pet around the head of the cat or offer him wet food or baby food while you trim a few nails at a time. Take a break then trim a few more.
- Choose a time when your cat is calm—naptime may be the best. It is possible that you may only be able to do one paw at a time, especially at first.

Cat Claw Clinic

We also offer a Cat Claw Clipping Clinic for guardians who need regular assistance keeping kitty's claws clipped. For questions and more information, please call 415-554-3030 or email hospital@sfpca.org.