



AVERSIVES FOR CATS

An aversive is something that your cat finds unpleasant. It can be used to discourage her from a particular action or place. Aversives by themselves however, rarely work. They are most effective when used as part of a behavior modification plan, where you teach your cat an appropriate, alternative behavior. Please experiment cautiously and sparingly when choosing an aversive, as individual responses will vary. An aversive that is mildly unpleasant for one cat may be terrifying for another and have no effect on yet another. The goal is to apply the aversive at a level that will cause your cat to avoid the action or place without becoming fearful, while working on teaching a pleasant alternative.

Using Textures as Aversives

Apply these textures to places you need your cat to avoid, and add toys or treats to appropriate places to make them more attractive.

Indoors:

- Shelf paper (sticky side up)
- Double-sided carpet tape – Sticky Paws® is a commercial version made especially for cats.
- Heavy aluminum foil
- Irregular or sharp rocks, firmly set into plant soil
- Heavy plastic carpet runner (pointed side up)

You may need to weigh the aversive material firmly or tape it to keep it in place. To protect furniture or floor finishes from sticky substances, attach the material to a piece of foil or heavy plastic and secure that with weights or light tape. Easy-to-attach, commercial varieties of texture aversives are available from most pet supply stores.

Using Smells as Aversives

Apply these substances to places you need your cat to avoid, and add toys or treats to make appropriate places more attractive. Avoid placing scent aversives near the litter box, as it may cause your cat to stop using the litter box.

Indoors and Outdoors:

- Citric odors – colognes, concentrated juices or fresh peels
- Aloe gel
- Vicks® VapoRub®

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 plant soil, use the same precautions.

Using Tastes as Aversives

Apply these substances to places where your cat's mouth should not be, and offer an appropriate toy or treat instead.

- Bitter Apple or similar sprays and gels marketed specifically for taste aversion
- Some hot sauces
- Cayenne pepper
- Citric odors (colognes, concentrated juices or fresh peels)
- Aloe gel

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

Surprise!

Remote-controlled Aversives:

These items can be used to keep your cat off items, like counters. They are activated by the cat's behavior, so the owner need not be present to apply them. They are available at pet supply stores or easy to make at home.

- Motion detector that emits a startling sound
- SSScat® is a motion-activated repellent spray
- Snappy Trainer or an upside-down mouse trap that is securely taped under paper to avoid contact
- Scat Mat (gives a slight static shock)
- Aluminum pie plate or cookie sheet containing water, pennies, beans or pebbles – preferably balanced precariously

WARNING: For fearful cats, avoid using aversives. Aversives may do more harm than good! Also, remember to start out with the lowest level aversive first and experiment cautiously to see what works for your pet.