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WHY DO CATS KNEAD?



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What Is Kneading?

Cat kneading is a natural and instinctive behaviour where cats rhythmically massage their paws into a soft surface. Cats may knead blankets, their owners, or another pet, and they usually knead before lying down. Cats will push out their paws into their chosen surface, alternating between their left and right paw, and will continue this action repetitively. This is also lovingly termed as 'making biscuits', since it looks as if the cats are kneading dough. Some cats may knead and bite blankets, some drool when kneading and others purr continuously; but all cats become really focused on this movement for some time.

But why do cats do this? This article explores the reasons behind why cats knead and how owners can respond.

Why Do Cats Knead?

Kneading is a common cat behaviour and can be for many different reasons, but it first begins when cats are kittens. Nursing kittens massage around the teat of their mother in order to stimulate milk flow. Whilst adult cats are no longer nursing, the sensation on their paws creates a familiar comfort from when they were kittens. You may even notice your cat drooling when kneading, or kneading and sucking a blanket, recalling the comfort of feeding from their mother.

However, there are many other possible reasons why cats knead and we take a further look below.

- **Comfort**

Cat kneading seems to release the flow of relaxing hormones. Since cats knead whilst

being petted, it's safe to assume that the sensation creates a calming effect which cats find pleasurable.

- **Making a Bed**

You'll often see cats kneading before lying down and settling for a nap. In this sense, cat kneading can be seen as a way of making their bed a comfortable place to rest.

- **Stretching**

Since we already know cats are natural yogis, the repetitive movement of their paws could be a way for the cat to stretch after a long snooze - before the next one.

- **Scent Marking**

Cats are very territorial and have scent glands in their paws. By massaging their paws into a surface, it's a way for them to mark their scent on certain things in the house - which is why cats knead blankets.

- **Mating**

Female cats that are in heat (known as oestrus) will often knead to signal to male cats that they are available for mating, especially if they are purring loudly and keen to be let outside. Check out our article on [the pros and cons of outdoor cats](#).

Should You Let Your Cat Knead You?

There is nothing wrong with cats kneading owners, as long as you are fine with it. Cats knead owners to show affection, and it's a positive sign that your cat feels comfortable and safe with you. Make sure you return the love and take time to [cuddle and play with your cat](#).

However, sometimes cat kneading can become a problem, especially if they are kneading in your lap and accidentally scratch you. If your cat kneads and bites blankets, it's possible for items to get ripped as they get really into it. Or you might have a dog who is just not interested in this massage from their feline friend.

There are a few things you can do to manage this behaviour if necessary:

- Keep your cat's claws trimmed. You can [create your own scratch post\(open in new tab\)](#) with our tutorial.
- Use nail guards for protection
- Place a thick blanket on your lap to avoid scratches
- Encourage your cat to knead on a blanket instead (use pheromone spray to redirect)
- Distract your cat with treats or a fun toy
- Guide them to lay down to relax instead

It's important that you don't punish your cat for kneading as it's a normal behaviour. Your cat isn't aware that they may be hurting you, and any punishments could cause your cat to respond aggressively. After all, you want your cat to feel safe with you. Learn the [benefits of positive communication](#) with your pet.

Besides kneading, cats have many other instinctive behaviours and like their big cat ancestors they are hunters. Read more to find out how you can help [unleash your cat's inner hunter](#).

Why Cats Knead FAQs

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1. Why do cats knead blankets?

Cats knead blankets as a way to self-soothe, and often knead before laying down for a snooze. Cats find it pleasurable and relaxing to massage their paws into a blanket, and it's a great way for them to make their sleep space comfortable.

2. Do Cats Knead When They Love You?

Yes, cats knead their owners as a way to show their affection. Since kittens knead their mothers to stimulate milk flow, adult cats continue this familiar comforting behaviour and it's a positive sign that shows your cat feels safe with you.

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