Aversives for Cats – Use with Care

An **aversive** is anything your cat finds unpleasant. Used carefully, it can discourage unwanted behavior—**but only as part of a larger plan** that also teaches an acceptable alternative.

Key Points

- **Pair with training:** Always give your cat a positive option (like a scratching post or perch).
- **Start mild:** What's harmless to one cat may frighten another.
- **Never use near litter boxes**—you may create new problems.
- **Avoid for fearful cats.** Aversives can increase anxiety.

1. Textures

Place on areas you want your cat to avoid; make the "yes" spots fun with toys or treats.

- Sticky shelf paper (sticky side up)
- Double-sided tape (e.g., Sticky Paws®)
- Heavy aluminum foil
- Heavy plastic carpet runner (nubby side up)
- Irregular rocks firmly set in plant soil

(Protect surfaces by putting foil or heavy plastic underneath and weighing down.)

2. Smells

Use only where litter boxes aren't nearby. Soak cotton balls or cloth and place on weighted foil/plastic:

- Citrus scents (peels, juice, citrus-scented cologne)
- Aloe gel
- Vicks® VapoRub®

3. Tastes

Discourage chewing; offer a safe toy instead:

- Bitter Apple® spray or similar

- Citric scents (as above)
- Aloe gel
- **Use with caution:** small amounts of hot sauce or cayenne pepper

(Always test on a hidden spot first—some substances can damage finishes.)

4. Remote "Surprise" Options

Activate when the cat jumps where it shouldn't—no human needed:

- Motion detector with a sudden sound
- SSScat® motion-activated spray
- Snappy Trainer or upside-down mouse trap (taped under paper for safety)
- Scat Mat (gentle static)
- Aluminum pie plate with water, pennies, or beans, balanced precariously

Remember: The goal is to make the wrong place briefly unpleasant while making the right place rewarding. Always begin with the gentlest option and watch your cat's reaction closely.