



Keeping Your Cat Off the Counter or Table

It's common for cats to climb or jump up on countertops, tables, stoves, and other vertical surfaces. Besides potentially irking pet parents, these choices can pose hazards, such as getting into toxic foods, moving past burning candles, and walking atop hot stoves. Here are some ways to motivate your cat to seek height elsewhere.

Why cats jump up

- Cats jump onto countertops and tables for various reasons, beginning with their instinctual desire to seek out elevated areas that offer a safe retreat from dogs, children, and other foot traffic.
- Elevated areas also offer strategic vantage points from which to survey their surroundings, both inside and outside the home.
- Cats may also be inadvertently rewarded for jumping on counters by finding and eating food left there.
- Areas such as kitchen counters and dining room tables are also prime real estate, because they're central spaces where people gather.
- To an attention-hungry cat, even negative attention is better than no attention at all. The cat may jump up on the stovetop or table because it captures human attention and might also result in them being picked up.

Strategies to resolve the issue

- The best solution to counter climbing is to provide more attractive alternatives! Provide elevated spaces the cat can use instead, such as cat trees, towers, perches, and elevated beds.
- Place perches right next to the cat's chosen places, such as the counter or table.
- Entice cats to use these high-rise escapes by placing warm, soft bedding, such as beds, fleece blankets, or even heated blankets.
- Spray catnip, calming pheromones, silvervine, or other favorite smells atop the kitty-designated area.
- Sprinkle the cat's favorite treats atop this space and offer them only in that space.
- Feed the cat's meals only in these elevated areas to encourage longer time spent there.
- Try using an interactive wand toy to lead the cat to voluntarily jump up on and happily navigate around this area.
- Reward the cat whenever they're exploring and hanging out in these spaces on their own.
- Consider placing the kitty high-rises in sunny areas or places with interesting outdoor viewpoints, such as next to a window with a bird feeder hung outside.

Prevent rehearsal of the undesired behavior

- Proactively guide the cat with treats and toys to the desired area at times when the cat previously sought out off-limits areas. This might be in anticipation of food being set out or when you're preparing dinner.
- Preemptively reward the cat for staying in their new spot while human food or their own meal is prepped.
- If you are too preoccupied to promptly reward the cat for remaining in the desired place, consider placing the cat in another contained area, such as a cat-specific room that holds all of their essentials, like food, water, litter box, toys, and bedding.
- Keep the counter and table clean of leftover food and drinks, to prevent inadvertently reinforcing the cat for finding them.
- If you do find the cat on an off-limit area, simply guide the cat back to the desirable alternative cat elevated area instead.

