

# Keeping Your Cat off the Counter

Cats like elevated places and in many homes the highest surface from the floor is the counter or table. These spots can be especially tempting if the cat finds food. Frustrated with your counter-cruising cat? Follow these guidelines.

## **Make counter unrewarding**

If your cat is rewarded for jumping on the counter, the behavior will continue. Keep your counters, table, and sink clear of food at all times. Buy several cheap plastic placemats and cover one side of them with double-sided tape. Keep the placemats on your counters and tables when they aren't in use. Cats don't like sticky surfaces, so the goal is for your cat to jump up, feel a painless but uncomfortable sensation, and jump down. When weeks have passed without signs of the cat on the counters, remove one placemat every day until the counter is clear. Another option is to lay a sheet of tin foil on your countertop, as most cats generally do not like walking on the texture of the tin foil. If your cat's cruising habit returns, put the mats/ foil back.

## **Confine your cat during mealtime**

If your cat won't stay off of the counters while you're working with food, confine him in a cat-proofed room with bedding, toys, water, and at least one litter box while you prepare food and while you eat. Let him out as soon as you're finished.

## **Don't punish**

Cats generally don't respond well to punishment. They become frightened and don't make the connection that their behavior caused it to happen. If you have more than one cat, punishment can startle the other cat while he is doing an appropriate activity like using his litter box. Physical and verbal punishment often causes stress in cats or provokes aggression, opening the door to problems such as biting or litter box rejection.

## **Reward appropriate activities**

Provide your cat a tall condo for climbing and reward him with treats for perching in the top. Buy a food-dispensing toy and let your cat bang it around on the floor where you'd like him to be. Since animals repeat what benefits them, make doing the right behavior rewarding for your cat.

## **Pick your battles**

The tips we've provided may reduce your cat's cruising habit, but they might not eliminate it. If you can't keep your cat off of the counter, make sure to clean before food preparation and clear the surfaces promptly so that your cat doesn't eat anything he shouldn't.