



Tearing Up and/or Consuming Paper, Plastic, or Fabrics

Cats will commonly play with and tear up paper, plastic, or fabric items. They are often easily accessible and a lot of fun, as your cat can bite and shred them, make noise, kick them around, and so much more. As long as your cat is not being destructive with this behavior, tearing up items of importance, or eating them, then it should be no problem. If they are becoming destructive, then you can help change the behavior by following the suggestions below:

The Behavior

If your cat is constantly playing with or tearing up paper or fabric items, it may be due to a behavior known as “plucking”. Plucking is a predatory behavior (like plucking the feathers off a bird they just caught) and can be very fun and satisfying for your cat.

Interactive Play

If you see this happening, try increasing the amount of interactive play time you give them each day. Increasing this opportunity to hunt, catch, and eat may help curb the behavior.

Puzzle Toys

You can also start feeding your cat their meals out of puzzle toys. This will allow them to work for their food, providing mental stimulation, and giving them an opportunity to simulate a hunt.

Enrichment

Increase the amount of enrichment your cat receives each day. Try frozen treats, cat grass, or stuffing a ball or other hollow toy with paper or fabric shreds, which will give them an appropriate outlet for this behavior. If your cat likes plastic wrappers, then try getting them toys that will crinkle when played with.

Stress

If your cat is stressed, anxious, or frustrated, they may be doing this as a displacement behavior. You can try cat appealing pheromone diffusers such as Feliway to see if that helps with the problem. Any or all of the above suggestions would also be beneficial in helping reduce stress and frustration.

Medical

If your cat is actually eating and consuming these items, then your cat may have a serious medical condition. The eating of nonfood items is called *Pica* and can be brought on by different factors. Some causes of *Pica* may be lack of nutrition, medical issues, and stress or anxiety. If your cat is ingesting nonfood items, you should speak with your vet as soon as possible to rule out any medical causes for the behavior. Depending on what and how much your cat is eating, these nonfood items could also cause blockages in their digestive tract, which could be serious for their health and costly to remedy.