

11 Ways for Dog and Cat Lovers to Pet-Proof Décor

Tips from interior designers on fabrics to avoid, invisible fences and custom scratching posts. Plus: how a visit to a Chinese restaurant yielded a great dog gate



SIT! SIT! Designer Jayne Michaels's spaniel mix lolls irreverently on her wool sofa.

PHOTO: NOE DEWITT/OTTO

By [Rachel Wolfe](#)

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I'M GOING to be home all day anyway." So went the thinking behind the 70% surge in pet fostering through the ASPCA in New York City and Los Angeles this March over the same period last year.

But pandemic puppies, eager adopters have discovered, think nothing of shredding a Tabriz pillow or mucking up a Parachute coverlet while you're putting a puzzle together in the next room. Imagine the mess you'll come home to when you're gone for an entire workday.

Fortunately, dogs and cats have been destroying the homes of designers (and their clients) forever. Here, the pros' strategies for preserving your digs without forfeiting style:

“Opt for sofas with a tight back. If a couch has a loose back cushion—especially if it's positioned in front of a window—it will get beaten down as the dog perches there.” —*Mary Beth Donohue, interior designer, New York*

“We took a panel that we found at a local Chinese restaurant—wood carved with dragons and symbols then painted gold—and we transformed it into a whimsical dog gate.” —*Jason Oliver Nixon, interior designer, High Point, N.C.*

“I know ‘carpet tiles’ might make you think of a dated commercial space, but there are quite a few beautiful, well-priced options these days that complement an elevated and stylish interior. They fit together seamlessly, but if your pet manages to ruin one, they pull up easily and can be replaced with a new piece in minutes.” —*Caitlin Murray, interior designer, Los Angeles*

“As someone who loves vintage furniture, antiques, and pieces that tell a story, I have learned that naturally tanned leather is a great option for pets. We have a cognac-colored leather sofa that has held up beautifully to more than a few incidents and scratch-to-get-comfortable sessions. It's also super easy to vacuum dog hair off it.” —*Alessandra Wood, vice president of style, Mody online interior design service*

“Invisible fences are not just for backyards. I have installed invisible fencing within some of my clients' homes. It eliminates the need for gates and other cumbersome or unattractive barriers.” —*Phillip Thomas, interior designer, New York*

“Instead of a bulky bedspread, use a blanket cover, which is much easier to throw in the wash or take to the cleaners.” —*Mary Beth Donohue*

“I have two cats and used to have a pair of Jens Risom chairs upholstered in a classic wool fabric. Wool is a favorite for cats to dig their claws into, so I had them reupholstered in a soft Crypton velvet. It's beautiful and impervious to cat claws.” —*Kati Curtis, interior designer, New York*

“We discovered our puppy Pablo’s love of sheepskin on a photo shoot, so we purchased one for our home that we transition from the floor to the sofa, so he has a place to sit and our sofa doesn’t get dirty.” —*Gabriela Gargano of Grisoro Designs, New York*

“While it’s important to regularly clean upholstery with lint rollers (I have one the size of a paint roller), you will save your sanity if you will just ‘go with’ the idea that your pet is going to leave its fur behind. And if the dog or cat is white, dark velvet upholstery will soon become the bane of your existence, regardless of how glamorous it looks.” —*Rachel Cannon, interior designer, Baton Rouge, La.*

“I didn’t want to clutter up my interior with a bed that screamed too dog, so I was very happy when I found a handmade woven rattan option from Amish Baskets that blends with the interior.” —*Grant K. Gibson, interior designer, San Francisco*

“To prevent a client’s cat from destroying all the new furniture we are installing, we’re building a scratching post out of fabric from the cat’s favorite chair that we will attach to the side of the custom media console. The idea is for the fabric to be able to be swapped out as it gets destroyed.” —*Kristen Peña, interior designer, San Francisco*

TONY TOYS / Let Them Chew On These



Clockwise from top left: Rope Crinkle Wood Duck Dog Toy, \$15, orvis.com; Elsie Elephant Plush Toy, \$35, maxbone.com; Floppy Octopus, \$12, fabdog.com; Tweed Squirrel Plush Toy, \$16, harrybarker.com