

# How to Keep Your Cats Out of Your Christmas Tree This Season

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So many things in life are better when you can share them with your dear sweet little kitty. But the Christmas tree might not be one of those. Combining Christmas trees and cats is usually more of a destructive experience than celebratory. Although, arguably, your cat is celebrating in its own way around the tree and on it. Fortunately, there are some easy tactics you can employ to help keep your cat safe during the holidays and your tree decorations intact.

## Cats Just Have Their Own Ideas About Christmas Trees

First, put yourself in your cat's place. An absolutely fascinating big new thing has been brought right into the living room. It's a whole live *tree*! It's now loaded with a captivating display of shiny bouncy baubles! If you're a cat, that's an obvious invitation to explore this wondrous tower of apparent toys, every inch of it.

Further, if you're a cat, you might be thinking, "This is just one more instance of mom showing how much she loves me. She just gave me a whole *tree* inside the house and literally *covered* it with a ton of my favorite kind of toys — the bouncy bauble kind! This is a special occasion!"

So, naturally, you're eager to play with your new toys and climb your new indoor tree. You can't *wait* to bat and grab and knock off all the curious bouncy baubles, climb to the tree top, and ultimately abscond with some decorations, if at all possible. It looks like it's sure to be the most fun you've *ever* had in the house, and it's time to start having it!

## Choosing Your Christmas Tree

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A live tree is an exciting addition to your home for your family and, as our holiday thought experiment above has just shown, possibly even more exciting for your cats. But, when it comes to the tree, it's either you *or* your cat. You cannot both have your own ultimate kind of fun with the *same* tree. Therefore, to help your cat see it your way:

- Maybe use a fake tree: An artificial tree, especially one that your cats have become familiar with over a few years, may be of less interest to them than a new, unfamiliar, live tree. So, you may want to consider giving a fake tree a chance this year.
- Use a small tree: Another way to keep the cat(s) out of the Christmas tree more easily is to get a much smaller tree — one does not offer the thrill of high climbing. It will still present the appeal of the bouncy baubles, but that can seem like a small problem compared to the annual toppling of the tree and demolition of decorations. A smaller Christmas tree is also safer because your cat can jump off the top of it more easily. That's just good planning.

## Setting Up Your Christmas Tree

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Instead of putting on the ornaments as soon as you set up the tree, consider waiting a couple of days to let your cat go wild with the tree *before* it's decorated.

- Allow an introduction period: After you set up your Christmas tree, let your cat have some days to experiment. Ideally, your cat will finally abandon the tree. The hope is that the cat will find that evergreens, especially one sized for the living room, are not rigid enough to be much fun structurally for a cat to climb and hang around on.
- Place the tree away from tall stuff: If possible, locate your tree as far as the space allows from furniture, mantles, window ledges, etc. This prevents your cat from using taller objects as springboards for jumping onto the tree.
- Use some natural cat repellent ideas: Apparently, cats tend not to enjoy aluminum foil or citrus aromas. So, you may want to try this: Loosely shape a dozen or so large, very thin aluminum balls with lemon and/or orange peels inside. Place these around the tree base and even in some of the tree limbs. Give your cat a day or two to see if this turns him/her off to fascination with the tree.
- Secure your tree: It's common knowledge that cats climb trees and they jump up on them to get started climbing up them. So, as a minimum, make sure your tree is stable at the base. Also, consider securing the tree higher up with some wire or cord attached to a wall. That way, if you find one or more cats in your Christmas tree, at least the tree can't easily crash down onto people, holiday gifts, falling felines, etc.

## Decorating Your Christmas Tree

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Accepting that your cat(s) will be playing with the ornaments, it's probably advisable to think in terms of cat-friendly Christmas decorations.

- Place lights strategically: Hang the lights a little toward the tree trunk instead of at the outside edges of the branches. That way, your cat may be less tempted to put his/her face deeper into the rough evergreen branches to chew the wires.
- Use safer ties for hanging ornaments: Cats can be seriously injured by metal ornament hooks. Consider tying your ornaments onto your tree branches with string instead.
- Be sure to unplug the lights when the tree is unattended: Your Christmas tree may be less compelling to climb or play with when it's not lit up for maximum attraction. Unplugging prevents the risk of your cat from getting burned or electrocuted by chewing wires. It also prevents the risk of a house fire from the cat potentially pulling the plug on the light strand partially out of the outlet, causing it to spark near gift wrap, etc.

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## Don't Let Yourself be Stressed by Cat and Tree Issues

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In the final analysis, you've probably made your peace with the knowledge that your cat will scratch your furniture at some point and bring in the occasional frog, rodent, etc. So, just try to accept that your kitty will also probably climb the Christmas tree. Just go ahead and enjoy your charming tree and don't be surprised when your cat inevitably rearranges some decorations. After all, for a cat, that's the fun of a Christmas tree.

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## Give Your Cat the Ultimate Gift!

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Distract your cat from wrecking your Christmas tree by giving him/her the incomparable option of playing outdoors! Your cat can frolic and climb his/her choice of trees at zero risk to holiday decorations! How?

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