



Feline Escape Prevention in Home

Keeping our kitties indoors is often the safest option for them. However, this can be difficult if your cat is curious about the outside world. Some cats are merely opportunistic about door darting, while others are accomplished escape artists. However, there are many ways that you can mitigate the risks of escape.

1. **Using “airlocks”—placing a barrier around your door area.** These can be cumbersome, but if the cat can't easily jump over them, they can be a quick solution. You can also pair them with other suggestions for added security. Exercise pens and baby gates come in all shapes and sizes, and most can fold up when not in use. Because many cats are prodigious jumpers, it pays to invest in a taller option. Retractable mesh pet gates can offer an easy barrier when answering the door to receive packages and deliveries.
2. **Meet those energy needs!** Engaging in consistent interactive play before you leave can help set your cat up for success when you need to exit. Make sure your play puts YOU in the driver's seat—that means long pole/feather/wand toys—any toy that you move for them. After your session, feed them some treats (or their meal!) Cats follow a cycle of Hunt > Catch > Kill> Eat > Groom > Sleep and will often choose to groom then rest after a lively play session if it is paired with food. Timing this correctly can help encourage calmer behavior when you exit.
3. **Take appropriate cat-proofing measures to and windows and other openings.** Many cats will include windows in their escape habits. Make sure that any windows are closed, especially when unsupervised. Cats have free-floating clavicles, and can therefore fit through extremely small spaces, sometimes—depending on the size of the cat—spaces smaller than 3". Make sure any open windows with screens are fitted with a robust screen material, such as Pet Screen.
4. **Offering a “slow release” treat that will keep your cat’s full attention while you are exiting.** Try using a wobbler, lick mat, or other slow feeder that will keep your cat occupied for at least the time it takes you to exit, preferably more! Make sure to use very tasty treats. This will have the added benefit of creating some positive associations with you exiting the home. The puzzle treat can be paired with the “hello-and-goodbye spot” to keep your cat occupied as you leave. For puzzle ideas, see our *Feline Enrichment handout!*
5. **Training a “hello-and-goodbye” spot.** Set up an official “hello-and-goodbye” spot on the other side of the room. This can be a [cat tree](#), window perch, chair, any place where your cat would enjoy sitting. Start by training your cat to go to that spot. You can call their name or tap the surface, and then reward them with a treat when they go to the spot. If your cat likes to be petted, call them to that spot and pet them as soon as they land there. If you practice [clicker training](#), you can click

and reward them for going to that spot. Do all your greeting and saying goodbye there, leave them with a treat, and THEN exit. *Make sure any treat you offer at the cat tree, window perch or whatever location you've chosen, is so tasty it's irresistible.* When it comes to choosing between darting out the door and munching on a special treat, there should be *no doubt in your cat's mind the treat is the better choice.* High value treats come in all shapes and sizes! Some shelter favorites are:

- Churu or Nulo meat tube sticks
- Tuna (in small portions)
- Blue Wilderness treats
- Bonito Flakes
- Freeze dried salmon treats
- All-meat baby food

When you come in the door at the end of the day, don't interact with your cat or greet them until you walk over to that official hello-and-goodbye spot. That's where you can lavish them with attention. Keep treats nearby in a container (or even keep some in your pocket) so you can reward them when they go to the spot.

NOTE: This option can help long-term to establish a new routine, but may require additional security measures while your cat is still learning.

6. If appropriate, consider harness training. Not all cats will benefit from outings in a harness, but for those that will, it can be a great option for creating predictability around exiting, as well as to take the edge off of desperation to get outside. For more information, check out our *Harness Training handout!*