



Dealing with Escape Artists

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We understand that it's one thing to *say* you want to keep your cat inside, but quite another to deal with a cat that constantly, relentlessly tries to get outside. Here are some tips for dealing with those escape artists.

It's likely you greet your cat when you come in, and kitty is right there waiting for you. Now you have to make the area around the door somewhere your cat *never* gets attention. Hellos and goodbyes need to take place away from that space.

Create a new space on the other side of the room, a place where your cat will enjoy sitting, perhaps a perch, chair or a cat tree, with her favourite treats stored nearby. Train her to go to that spot by calling her name and rewarding her with a treat when she arrives.

When you come in the door, don't greet the cat until you've reached that new space. Then lavish her with attention and a treat. Soon enough she'll be jumping up there as soon as she hears your key rattle in the lock.

If you're having trouble teaching your cat that the doorway is not a good place, you can try another deterrent. Every time your cat accompanies you to the door, yell and make noise (smack the door with a rolled up newspaper or even a pot). It teaches your cat that the door is not a fun place after all, and her hesitation may well buy you valuable time in the future.

You can also use smell to keep the cat away from the door zone. Cats dislike citrus smells, so diluted orange or lemon juice sprayed around the bottom of the door may help.

But that doesn't necessarily do much for you when you're trying to go *out* the door. So the next step is to introduce a puzzle feeder / toy before you head out. Go to her new space, and entice the kitty to join you by offering her a treat. Once she's away from the door, give her the puzzle toy -- stuffed with a treat to enhance its distraction value -- to keep her busy while you leave.

Make sure your cat has a rich environment. Read our resources on making sure cats have sufficient stimulation, or creating a safe outdoor environment for your cat.

Finally, if you do have an escape artist, make sure he or she wears a collar or is microchipped, and that you have a good, recent photograph. All increase your chances of having your cat returned home safely if they do manage to get out.