

Four Tips to Kitten-Proof Your Home

Think like a cat when preparing your home for a new arrival. Look for potential hazards, then remove them from your new cat's reach.

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When cat-proofing your home, consider two things, says James Richards, DVM, director of the Cornell Feline Health Center in New York: "What do you want to protect from the cat, and what do you want to protect the cat from?" Cats are curious and mischievous by nature, so remove temptations and stow valuables.

Can you swallow this? Kittens love to play with and chew small objects, which could cause choking or internal damage. String is especially hazardous because cats are naturally attracted to it. In addition, stash away sewing kits, paper clips, rubber bands, pins and any other items small enough to fit into a cat's mouth. Although cats may ignore electrical cords, some may chew them, so monitor your cat and if necessary, block access to electrical cords.

Poison. More than 100 plants can be toxic to pets. Ask your veterinarian for a list of such plants in your area or check the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) website, and eliminate any hazardous household plants. A few common problem plants to be aware of include azaleas, English ivy, the diffenbachia species, poinsettia, Easter lily, jade tree, lily of the valley, philodendron, caladium, amaryllis and chrysanthemum.

Also, be careful about where you store medications. Aspirin, acetaminophen and other medications are toxic. In addition, place household cleaners, antifreeze, insect or mouse poison or traps and anything else common sense tells you would be dangerous out of your cat's sight and reach.

Breakables. If you don't want valuables broken, put them away. Another concern is unstable furniture or other large, heavy objects that might fall. Arrange furniture so your cat can't get stuck behind or inside anything, and always tie up the cords on your blinds so your cat won't get entangled.

Kitty Alcatraz. Cats are safest indoors, and a house cat that escapes is at the mercy of an often hostile environment. Shut doors and secure screens. Metal screens are the most tear-resistant.