

How to Prevent Losing a Foster Cat

Whether out of curiosity, or fear, cats have a knack for being escape artists. Your foster cat might be used to the outdoor life and interested in returning to it, or they may just be confused and fearful of their new home. Bringing a foster cat into your home requires some adjustment, from you and from them! Keep the below rules in mind when preparing for, and caring for your foster cat:



1. When setting up your **Sanctuary Room**, ensure that it is as “cat-proof” as possible. Used a finished room with a door that closes securely. If the room you are using has windows, they must remain closed. Screens are not strong enough and are easily broken by a cat determined to get outside. Make sure there are not any points where a cat may access inside the walls (such as a hole around a pipe going into the wall) or ceiling (such as rafters or a drop-ceiling).

Make sure your cat has access to multiple, appropriate hiding spots. These can include the carrier they go home in (with the door taken off), boxes on their sides with towels draped over them, or even cubbies in a bookshelf. Cats will want to hide in a new environment if they do not feel secure, and if you do not provide these hiding spots, they may panic and try to find ways to escape.

If you have a cat that will try to charge or bolt at the door, use a blanket or towel to visually block their view from the floor and up.

2. Make sure you have an understanding of how to secure the **carrier** your foster cat uses. When your cat is not using it, take it out of the sanctuary room and learn how to properly open and close it and ensure that it is built properly. If it is a cardboard carrier, make sure it is folded properly. If it is a hard-case carrier, put something heavy in the carrier and pick it up by the handle to see if there are any fasteners that are not working properly.
3. Once you are ready to let your foster cat out of the sanctuary room, you need to ensure the rest of your home is as “cat-proof” as possible. Block off access to any fireplace or chimney. Keep windows closed at all times, unless you are supervising the cat. Just as with windows, a screen door is easily broken by a cat, so the interior door must remain closed. Ensure that if you have a balcony the cat does not have access to it. Ask the foster department for a x-pen you can place around the balcony door. Check for access points in your walls and ceilings and ensure the cat has multiple appropriate hiding places throughout your home.



4. If you are opening a door that leads outside for an extended period (bringing in groceries etc.), first place your foster cat in a closed room. Some cats will charge doors that lead outside and should be secured in a room when you enter or exit your home. Ask the foster department to provide you with a x-pen you can place around the interior part of the door as an obstacle to these cats.
5. If you have a foster cat who has shown interest in the outdoors and you want to provide them with safe access to it, ask the training department about harness training. Do not let a cat outside, even on a leash, without speaking to the training department first about **harness training**.
6. If a Toronto Humane Society trainer has given you a plan for managing and working with your foster cat, it is because we assigned it a "TLC" status. These cats are on special training plans and may be at higher risk for escaping. Please follow these instructions and let the training staff know immediately if you have questions or concerns.

