

# Ferret-proofing Your Home

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*



Anyone who has ferrets knows how much they get into things and how hard it is to watch them every second. Ferrets are intelligent, curious, and persistent! In order to keep your ferrets safe while they're roaming around (and also to keep your belongings safe from them), it's very important to make sure that your home is ferret-proofed.

Ferret-proofing means looking at your home from the viewpoint of a ferret, and taking precautions to establish a [safe play area](#) for them. Do you have an open garbage can in the area where they play? Unless it is moved, it will likely be tipped over and strewn about. Do you have fragile knickknacks on a table next to the couch? Move them or lose them! Do you burn candles in your home? Make sure they are high enough that your ferret can't get to them and singe his whiskers or worse.

Does the task of ferret-proofing seem overwhelming? If you're not sure where to begin, sit down in the room where your ferrets will be playing and make a list of everything that you think could be dangerous for them. Here are some places you will probably want to start.

## **Furniture**

Recliner chairs are very dangerous for ferrets, as they can climb up into them and get crushed. Remove recliners from the ferrets' play area.

Ferrets love to dig and burrow into sofas; unfortunately, sofas can be very dangerous for them. A ferret could lose an eye on a spring or staple, or get a blockage from ingesting the material inside the couch. If the couch sits up off the floor, staple a heavy fabric or nail a piece of plywood across the bottom of it. Use slipcovers to keep your ferrets from going down through the cushions and into the couch. You may want to consider only using futon style couches if your ferrets are especially persistent.

If your ferrets are in your bedroom, make sure that you affix something to the bottom of the box springs to keep the ferrets out of there as well.

## **Appliances**

Ferrets can very easily fit behind or under many major household appliances, such as refrigerators, stoves, washers, dryers, dishwashers, etc. This is dangerous for multiple reasons. Ferrets could be injured or killed if the appliance is on or if they chew on the electrical wires. It is best to keep them out of the kitchen or laundry room altogether. However, if you are going to let them into these areas, it is very important that you ferret-proof these appliances. Use wood, cardboard, or duct tape to block access to the underside and backs, and always verify that there are no ferrets in or around them before using them.

## **Cabinets & Drawers**

There are frequently items in cabinets and drawers that you wouldn't want ferrets getting into, especially in the cupboards that contain household cleaners. Many child safety devices are ineffective because they leave a small gap that ferrets can squeeze



through. It's best to use magnets, Velcro®, bungee straps, or other things that will hold the door or drawer firmly closed.

### Moving Things Out of Reach

When you ferret-proof, you have to think like a ferret. It sounds silly, but the best thing you can do is get down on your hands and knees and look around the room. Anything that is at your eye level or lower is something they can easily reach with little effort. Couches, shelves or other things they can climb could provide access to items that are higher up. Make sure that all breakable items, candles, wires and other such things are out of reach or, in the case of wires, outfitted with covers or protective sheaths to keep your ferrets from chewing on them. Ferrets also love to chew on rubber-type items, so be sure to keep remote controls, computer mice, and other items with rubber buttons in cupboards or away from ferrets.

### Preventing Escapes

Ferrets are very adept at getting into small spaces. Why? Because most ferrets can get their bodies into a space as long as it is big enough to accommodate their heads. Many ferrets are small enough to fit under doors, behind furniture, through open laundry vents or spaces around plumbing and in other 1" spaces. If you have spaces like that in their play area, block them off.



Ferrets can also tear through window screens, so if you aren't supervising your ferret during playtime, close all windows that your ferret can reach or open them from the top. If you have to leave them open for ventilation, never leave your ferret alone in a room where he can climb up in the window.

If your ferrets play in a room with a door to the outside, keep a close eye on them. It only takes one person who is not aware of how quick and sneaky ferrets can be to open the door and unwittingly allow them to escape to the outside. The safest things to do are block off the door (a [playpen](#) works well to create a small barrier in front of the door), hold your ferret when people are coming and going, or put your ferret in his [cage](#) when there will be lots of people entering and exiting your house. Many people lose their ferrets each year because they underestimated how quickly a ferret could slip around someone's feet.

These aren't even close to all of the ferret-proofing tasks that you will need to do, but they are a good start! Every ferret's personality is different, so you will need to ferret-proof different things for different fuzzies. Some ferrets will be fascinated by trying to dig inside the couch while others will try desperately to dig their way under the door, and still others will spend endless hours pulling your books or movies off the shelves. Tailor your ferret-proofing to your individual ferret's behavior for the best results.

And finally, a word of caution! Ferret-proofing is a never-ending job. Ferrets are very persistent and very intelligent. They will often find a way around your ferret-proofing, and you will need to come up with other ways to thwart them. Give the room a good once-over before letting your fuzzies out to play. Review your ferret-proofing measures thoroughly at least once a month, and always keep an eye out for new items in the room that may catch your ferret's eye and need to be ferret-proofed.