

FACTSHEET

Balcony safety

Cats and balconies are a risky mix. Cats are born adventurers and might see a second or even third floor balcony as a gate to the outside world. Although cats are good at balancing on railings they could get a fright and fall, or see a passing bird and instinctively pounce.

Vets tell too many sad stories of cats who have lived successfully with unrestricted balcony access for years, only to suffer a tragic accident later in their lives. It only takes one slip. The old adage that 'cats always land on their feet' is simply not true. Falls often result in broken limbs, jaws, or pelvic bones, as well as causing internal injury, which is not always immediately apparent. Some falls can be fatal.

Fortunately, balconies can be adapted easily and inexpensively to become spaces where cats can safely enjoy outdoor time. Enclosed balcony access enables cats to experience the outside world safely. Exposure to fresh air and sunshine, breezes and scents, and neighbourhood sights and noises are all psychologically beneficial for feline health.

Balcony cat-nets are a simple and highly effective choice when installed from floor to rooftop. A range of netting products are available through secureakat.com.au and catnets.com.au, with both commercial installation and DIY options. Specially designed cat safety nets are UV and chew resistant. Transparent versions are available to comply with building regulations and keep balconies looking tidy without obstructing views. Commercial cat enclosures are also available through catmax.com.au and catnip.com.au. Options range from enclosed tunnels to multi-level cat complexes.

Once your balcony is safely enclosed, add some items of feline interest to make the balcony a special place for your cat. Maximise the use of vertical space by installing perches. Perches are a great addition, as they allow for elevated views over the neighbourhood and are fun for climbing, playing and even napping. There are many varieties of cat perches available. Choose a strongly built product to suit the indoor/outdoor balcony environment or build your own. A special cat bed might be placed on a perch or in a sunny, sheltered corner of the balcony. Even taller scratch towers can be used in a corner to provide vertical space for your cat to explore. Toys can be strategically placed to flutter in the breeze.

Add cat-friendly potted plants such as cat grass, catnip or cat mint. These can be grown inexpensively from seed, then transplanted into larger pots. Or start with young, already established plants from your local nursery. This feline-friendly greenery makes a lovely contribution to the beauty of your balcony and will give your cat something delicious to nibble on. Just keep in mind that some plants can be toxic to cats, so ensure you check any plants placed on the balcony are cat safe. For more information, see our factsheet [Cat-friendly Flowers](#). Also be mindful that some cats may use the pot plants as a litter tray so try and use heavy pots that your cat can't tip over if they dig in it.

If your cat does not have immediate access to inside the home when on the balcony, always ensure you provide fresh water and a litter tray on the balcony.

Once you have the area set up, it's a good idea to sit on the balcony with your cat a few times before leaving them out there on their own, to ensure the area is escape proof and to show your cat it's a nice area to spend time.

Enjoy turning your balcony into a safe, enriched environment for your cat and a visually beautiful space where you can happily relax together.

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