

How Well Do You Ferret-Proof?

Take this quiz to find out how well you ferret-proof your home.

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Your ferrets depend on you to keep them safe in your home.

Ferret-Proof Question 1: The correct answer is D.

- a) Cats do enjoy the freedom of the flap, especially when you need to take them to a vet appointment. They will disappear out through the flap and return 24 hours later, long after the appointment is over. It's a cat thing. Although this answer is correct, it's not the full story.
- b) I'm not kidding about the skunk. This happened to my sister years ago. She was reading in a chair in the living room, looked up and saw a skunk standing 6 feet away from her. She screamed, it screamed. Then it ran and hid beneath the bookcase. We left the side door open all night and it left peacefully. I'm not sure which one was more scared, the skunk or my sister. Although this answer is correct, it's not the full story.
- c) My ferret Ping learned how to zip outside through the cat flap the first day we installed it. We thought he wouldn't be able to climb up to where it was. We were wrong. Did we feel stupid? Yup. Although this answer is correct, it's not the full story.
- d) All of the above is the correct answer, at least in my experience. Score 10 points.

Ferret-Proof Question 2: The correct answer is C.

- a) Of course it's your home. It is full of ferret toys! Normal people don't have a home full of jingle balls and crocheted eggs.
- b) No, no, no. If your ferrets had done something absolutely horrible they wouldn't care if you found out. They are proud of the domestic mayhem that they wreak. They never try to cover their tracks. In fact, they can and will do absolutely horrible things right in front of you (over and over again) because they enjoy your reaction so much!
- c) An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Accordingly, when in doubt, check in on the little guys. Do a head count. Nine times out of ten they are just fine, dead asleep to the world in some exotic location. (Likely the one place where you least want them to be.) Score 10 points for keeping that tenth time in mind.
- d) Never ignore the silence. When ferrets are in trouble, odds are that they are in trouble very, very quietly.

Ferret-Proof Question 3: The correct answer is D.

- a) Ferrets know that you don't want them digging in the plants, they just don't care. Not the first time, and not the eighteenth time you find them doing it. Nor the forty-ninth. Although this answer is correct, it's not the full story.
- b) The Internet is a great place to do your research. Your vet might be able to direct you, too. Although this answer is correct, it's not the full story.
- c) Experience has taught many ferret owners that the best place for a houseplant is hanging from the ceiling. Of course, I did once find Lily Weasel swinging, hanging from a mature spider plant by her little front paws. I must have forgotten to pay my gravity bill that month. Although this answer is correct, it's not the full story.
- d) Score 10 points for accepting that all of the above make a houseplant an attractive nuisance in the presence of a ferret, and planning accordingly.

Ferret-Proof Question 4: The correct answer is D.

- a) It is a delusion that what is thrown away in your bathroom wastebasket will stay thrown away in the presence of ferrets. Unless you don't mind seeing it again, plan accordingly. Ferrets love to recycle. And they don't embarrass easily.
- b) See answer to A. This may hold true for any wastebasket in your home, including the one in your kitchen. Make sure that things dangerous to a ferret are really, truly disposed of.
- c) Why, oh why did it take me so long to figure this out? There are two bricks in the bottom of my bathroom wastebasket. Now I throw things away into it once, and only once.
- d) Score 10 points for realizing that it is your responsibility to manage the trash, and not the ferret's responsibility to leave it alone.

Ferret-Proof Question 5: The correct answer is B.

- a) It is not fair, wise or kind to either the ferret or the small child to be left alone together with no adult supervision.
- b) Score 10 points for realizing that even the nicest ferret might bite if it feels scared, and for accepting that even the

niciest small child is still learning the proper way to relate to animal friends.

Ferret-Proof Question 6: The correct answer is True. But they can't necessarily get out again without help. Consider blocking access to the undersides of appliances. Score 5 points.

Ferret-Proof Question 7: The correct answer is True. I have heard of this happening many, many times. It's best not to have reclining chairs or not to have them in a room where ferrets have access. Score 5 points.

Ferret-Proof Question 8: The correct answer is False. I'm not sure that the metal wire interests them, but the plastic or rubberized exterior coating does. Some will chew it, with fatal results. Cover all electrical cords with protectors. These are usually available at hardware or home improvement stores. Score 5 points.

Ferret-Proof Question 9: The correct answer is True. It can be of enormous help to remove the feet from the bottom of a sofa, and have it rest flush on the floor. This prevents the ferrets from getting inside the couch. Score 5 points.

Ferret-Proof Question 10: The correct answer is False. I have seen ferrets make 4-foot horizontal leaps! This needs to be considered when ferret-proofing the home. Score 5 points.

Ferret-Proof Question 11: The correct answer is True. If you can train them to come to you when you squeak a toy, your life will be easier and theirs will be safer in an emergency when you need to gather them up. Score 5 points.

Ferret-Proof Question 12: The correct answer is False. Too many ferrets die every year when they eat chunks of soft rubber that can't pass through the gut. Keep rubber away from these guys to prevent blockages. Score 5 points.

Ferret-Proof Question 13: The correct answer is True. And this can be fatal. Be careful, because ferrets aren't. Always check the interior of a washer, dryer or dishwasher before running, and check the refrigerator before closing the door. Score 5 points.

Ferret-Proof Question 14: The correct answer is True. When a ferret seems ill, don't guess! Talk to a vet. Don't look in your medicine cabinet. Always keep your medicine out of ferret reach. Even common over-the-counter drugs like acetaminophen can be toxic to ferrets. Score 5 points.

Ferret-Proof Question 15: The correct answer is True. It seems hard to believe, I know, but keep that lid closed! Score 5 points.

Scoring:

0 to 25 points — Your ferrets hope you don't learn any more. They want to live life on the edge!

26 to 50 points — Oh, now you're eating into your ferrets' fun. They love danger!

51 to 75 points — You are such a wet blanket. You won't let your ferrets have any fun!

76 to 100 points — At this rate your ferrets will live to resent your interference in their affairs for a long, long time!

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Alexandra Sargent-Colburn lives in Massachusetts with fish, ferrets, a cat, a husband and a neurotic dog. The ferrets are in charge.