

Helping the Shy or Fearful Cat

Many cats are fearful in a new environment and need some time to adjust. Fearful cats avoid people or things that frighten them, they may hide or seem disinterested and sometimes hiss, spit or swat to make what they're afraid of go further away. If you've decided to share your life with a shy cat, take heart. The following information can help you understand what he is feeling and give you ways to help him feel better.



Recommended reading on cat behavior:

“Cat Sense,” by John Bradshaw

“Total Cat Mojo:
The Ultimate Guide to Life with Your Cat,”
by Jackson Galaxy

“The Trainable Cat: A Practical Guide to
Making Life Happier for You and Your Cat,”
by John Bradshaw and Sarah Ellis

Tips for working with shy cats

- Fearful cats usually do best in relatively quiet homes.
- Provide your cat with a safe, small, quiet room or space at first.
- This space can be set up with appropriate hiding places, like a cat tree and cozy blankets.
- Be sure your cat's space has a litter box within easy reach of the cat, but away from food and water.
- Avoid staring, direct eye contact, or towering over your cat
- Avoid making loud noises
- Avoid pulling or forcing your cat out of hiding or to be held
- Speak softly and calmly
- Allow your cat to choose to approach or interact (or not)
- Encourage and play with interactive toys (cat charmer, or feather wand)
- Build confidence and positive interactions through reward-based, force-free training methods
- Pair your voice or petting with high-value foods
- Praise and treat to make positive associations with new sights and sounds and for relaxed, calm behavior
- When he is showing signs of exploring, gradually let him explore the rest of the house



Contact our Behavior Helpline for more information

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