

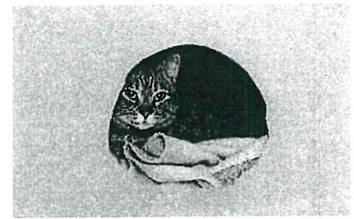


## Acclimating scared cats

It can take weeks or even months for a scared cat to feel at home in its new home. A nervous kitty is often head-shy (will shy away if you try to pet her on the head), may be prone to hiding, and you might notice her slinking (walking with her legs bent so she's low to the ground).

Knowing why a cat is nervous can help you sort out the best treatment. It can also help you manage your own expectations. A cat that's predisposed to skittishness might not ever become the cuddly kitty that you envisioned when you adopted her, and if you know this up front you won't be as likely to blame yourself if your cat doesn't make as much progress or doesn't open up as quickly as you want her to.

Just like people, there are all manner of reasons that your kitty could be nervous. Many nervous cats have experienced some kind of trauma like abuse or a dog attack. Others are just not socialized, so they aren't used to being around people and living in a home. They may be afraid of dogs, other cats, or even strange things like trash cans. It's all about familiarity and instincts. Unlike dogs, cats don't travel in a pack so when they feel threatened (even if it's just by you wanting a pat), they'll run and hide in a safe place. Cats that have access to a box they can hide in (even a shoebox will work!) adapt to their new environment better than those who do not have a hiding box. When faced with conflict or tension and forced to choose between fight or flight- the hiding box makes for a good compromise.



In general, a nervous cat does best in a quiet home, but that doesn't mean you can't acclimate your kitty if you live somewhere noisy or have kids. What's important is that you give the cat a safe place to hide and that you be patient and work with her. In a more hectic environment, it can take a long time for your nervous kitty to mellow out and come out of her shell, but there are some ways to help her be more confident.

Love and patience go a long way in making your nervous cat more comfortable in her new home, but you can also use training techniques and medications to help your kitty acclimate.

With a new cat one of the best things that you can do is put her in a small, confined space, like a bathroom, where she can hide but you can also get to force a little bit of love on her. You should have everything in this room that your kitty needs: food, water, litter, a bed, and some toys. She could be in that space for a few days to a few weeks before she's ready to venture into the rest of the house, so you want to make it comfortable for her.

There are some herbal remedies that you can try. Rescue Remedy herbal extracts for pets can help ease anxiety. You drop it into her water or apply onto her ears. Feliway is a feline pheromone that makes cats feel comfortable in a strange place. You can spray it around the room or use it in a diffuser. There are also pheromone collars that have the same comforting effects, and we sell these at LCHS!

Your cat is much more likely to make an appearance if she feels safe in the room, so if you want to encourage her to socialize a little, entertain in a room that is not sparsely furnished. She needs baskets and furniture to hide behind, so she feels safer exploring. You can use treats in this situation, as well. If your cat comes to the doorway to check things out, toss her a high reward treat like a small piece of chicken. Don't push the cat too hard, but reward any relaxed behavior with high-value treats.