

Cats That Hide in the Home



Shy cats are easily overwhelmed by their environment, and cope with this by hiding. A cat who hides and seems afraid of their new home can be frustrating. Here are some tips for helping cats that hide:

1. Give them a room of their own and let them decompress

Give them their own room with food, water, a brand new litter box, a hidey/ igloo/ cave bed, and some toys. You can leave on classical music, or YouTube sounds of cats purring. One room gives them a reasonable amount of space to call their own, but won't overwhelm them with too much newness all at once. Whatever you do, **DO NOT PULL A CAT OUT OF THEIR HIDING SPACE.** This will cause them to be even more fearful, and possibly lead to a bite. They will decide when to come out, and will feel great that it was their decision. Be patient. For some cats, it can take months.

2. Create a routine

Begin a routine. Replenish the cat's food and water daily at the same times, and clean the litter box at the same time daily, as well. Plop down on the floor in close proximity to the hiding spot, and spend some time talking to them. This will make your voice familiar, and in time, gain their trust.

3. Use pheromones

One of the primary causes of anxiety in any new cat is the feeling like they're walking into a home that could belong to other cats. Shy cats feel this overwhelming sensation even more. Feline "happy cat" pheromones (like Feliway/ComfortZone), whether in the form of a plug-in diffuser, spray, wipes, or collars, can go a long way to help relieve a cat's territorial anxiety.

4. Give positive reinforcement

Tell your shy kitty how brave they are when they come out from hiding and allow themselves to be petted. Do this often. The more you say it, the more you'll believe it, and the more you believe it, the more they'll believe it. Cats feed off of our emotions.

5. Ignore them and let them come to you

We know it's difficult, but ignoring undesired behaviors in cats helps to create desired behaviors. The more you ignore a shy cat, the more interested in you they will become. Never follow them or reach for them. If you put your hand out, and they come to you, they will know it is their decision to do this, which builds their confidence.

6. Build their confidence

Play is a great way to build a shy kitty's confidence. It may take a while before they'll feel comfortable enough to engage in any interactive play. But don't give up; they'll come around eventually, especially if you're using a super-tantalizing toy. The Go Cat: Cat Catcher is a mouse wand toy that most cats can't resist!

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7. Utilize high-value treats

Tempt them out with a tasty treat. Many cats respond quite favorably to tuna fish. Put some tuna out on a plate several feet from the hiding spot as you leave the area. Get into the routine of dropping off the treat when you leave the cat's area. Eventually, you can introduce the treat while staying next to the plate. When the cat is confident that there is no danger, it will come to get the treat with you there. If a cat can eat in front of you, they trust you.

8. Test and expand their challenge lines

A challenge line is one past which you can't go before a cat has a negative reaction, like hiding. Most cats are extremely food-motivated, so gradually moving their dish closer to you to expand their horizons – even if those horizons only run from one side of a room to the other. This only works if you don't leave food sitting out all day for your cat (which you shouldn't be doing anyway).

9. Create hiding spots in the center of the action

Block off hiding spots that are out of the way (like under beds and furniture). And create hiding spots in the middle of the action. Provide a spot for your cat to disappear in plain sight where they can still be a part of family life. If your cat is able to "hide" by crawling into an igloo/ cave/ hidey bed in the living room, as opposed to retreating to a spot under the bed, you'll be able to help a nervous or scared cat build confidence and integrate with the family.

10. Be patient

Give it time. Every cat that hides is different. The key is to be patient, as there is no set amount of time for the cat to feel comfortable. If you are patient and understanding, you will be rewarded with a wonderful, trusting companion.