

Tips to help a shy cat or kitten become comfortable in a new home

If you have adopted a shy cat or kitten, the following tips may help your new kitty become accustomed to you and your home more:

- 1) Cats are creatures of habit and love predictable environments. During the first few days, avoid making loud or sudden noises, and try to leave an escape route for your new cat so that he retreat to a hiding place if he feels insecure.
- 2) Most cats will exhibit shy behavior when introduced to new environments. Cats are cautious animals by nature and tend to look for the protection and comfort of an environment where they can fully or partially conceal themselves. Providing a cardboard box, teepee-style bed or other covered bed can help your cat feel safe. As they become more accustomed to the sights, sounds, people, and animals in the new space, they will leave their hideaway and seek companionship and sustenance.
- 3) When the cat has become comfortable eating from the food dish, sit down a foot away from the dish and, after a few moments, reach over from behind and gently stroke her. Never bring your hand directly toward the cat's face, as this may startle her. As your cat becomes accustomed to the petting, over time move the food dish to different spots in your home. Cats are "site specific" in that they associate certain behavior with various locations. Your cat will associate your affection with the food and with the location of the food dish. Even when the food dish is removed, she will think of the location as a safe spot to receive and give affection.
- 4) Use toys to engage your cat or kitten in play. Feather toys or string toys attached to poles are great devices to coax your pet to come closer to you while providing some distance between you and your kitty if he still feels unsure.
- 5) Do not stare at your kitty. When you do make eye contact, slowly lower your lids, blink slowly, or close your eyes. You will see him do the same in response. If he is nervous at your touch, the stress can be reduced, if again, you close your eyes — no predator kills with its eyes closed. In the natural world of prey and predator, when one stares at the other, it means someone is about to be someone else's dinner. DO make eye contact when you have food, a treat, or a gift.
- 6) A hawk is a cat's natural enemy. Don't look like one by swooping down on him! Your new kitty will like you best if you are sitting on the floor or a couch where you can be at his level.
- 7) If your kitty runs when you pass her, pass her with your back to her.
- 8) NEVER yell at or punish your cat with loud noises.
- 9) When you pick him up, do it slowly and gently. Hold him only until he begins to struggle, then let him down. Try rewarding him with a treat either while you are holding him or immediately upon setting him down. Gradually attempt to increase the amount of time that you

hold him, but if your cat tries to bite or scratch, yowls, or flattens his ears, release him immediately for your own safety and his comfort.

Your cat's introduction will be a little slower. She may require a little more effort, but once you've won her over, the bond is even stronger and she will become the most special cat you've ever had. It's all there waiting for the person who nurtures it.

Adapted from [Tips for Adopters: Interacting with a Shy Cat or Kitten Who Was Socialized Late](#) by Nancy Alusick, KittyKind, and Kathleen Goward, Anjellicle Cats