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Bringing Home a Fearful Cat

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Cats appreciate routines and patterns so they can feel comfortable and safe. If you are bringing home a fearful cat, the following tips will help your cat feel welcome in their new home.

1. Set up a safe area for the cat. For more information on how to do this, read our article about [Bringing Home Your New Cat](#). For fearful cats, make sure you provide them plenty of hiding spaces in their room. You can use covered beds, or even cardboard boxes turned on their side. Providing hiding places for your cat allows them to quickly and easily retreat and hide if they feel scared.
2. Use feeding times to bond with your cat. Many cat owners leave dry food out for their cat but may feed their cat wet food a few times a day.

Alternatively, you can offer treats a few times a day if you don't give wet food. Using treats or canned/wet food creates a valuable bonding experience for people and cats. Start by offering treats in your hand towards the cat. You can offer wet food on a spoon. Offer the food to the cat within a few inches of them but if they don't readily take it, drop the food near them and remove your hand. You can sit and wait quietly for a few seconds to see if your cat will eat the treats, but if they don't, you should leave the room for a few minutes.

When you check back to see if the cat has eaten the treats, you can start over from the beginning; offering treats from your hand. If the cat has not eaten the treats, leave them there and try again later in the day. Repeat this process at least 2 times per day with your cat, and soon they will be eating right out of your hand.

3. While you are building trust with your cat, it is important to allow the cat to consent to petting. You can "ask" your cat if they would like to be pet by offering the back of your hand a few inches away from their nose. If they rub their head on your hand then they have said, "Yes, please pet me," but if they don't, they are likely saying, "I would not like to be pet right now."

It can be really hard to resist the temptation to just give your kitty some scratches but while you are building your cat's trust in you it is important to listen to their wants.

For many shy cats, having a patient owner will help them learn to trust and to flourish in their new home. For behavior and training advice, please contact Operation Kindness at behavior@operationkindness.org or visit www.operationkindness.org/training.