



Adopt a Pet™

**Should I be
concerned that
my new cat is
hiding so much?**

Don't take it personally.
They just need a little time, space, and coaxing.

You just brought home your newly adopted cat, and they immediately dart under your bed, peering out at their new surroundings with saucer-like eyes. It's a stark contrast to the super-affectionate, relaxed kitty you met waiting to be adopted.

What happened? Why is your new cat hiding from you? Read on to learn about the specific reasons behind this behavior, and discover tips to help your new kitty relax and become more sociable.

Why your new cat is hiding

Your new cat may be hiding because of the new environment, unfamiliar scents, or the presence of other pets. It's common for cats to hide initially, as they acclimate to their surroundings.

Here are four common reasons why your cat may be hiding.

1. Adjustment

Any time a cat's environment changes, they won't know if that change is a good thing or a threat. This is a normal response to being in a new location and, in most cases, not a reflection of how your cat will act forever.

2. Stress

Things like excited kids, barking dogs, loud music, loud verbal exchanges, and construction can stress cats, prompting them to seek hiding spots to cope with the overwhelming stimuli around them.

3. Illness

Your cat may retreat to a secret spot to feel more secure when they're injured or sick. The reason? Survival. In the wild, illness or injuries make cats vulnerable to predators.

4. Other pets

Another pet in the home can trigger feelings of insecurity, prompting the new cat to seek refuge until they feel more confident in their surroundings. For the best chance of success, introduce animals through a slow, gradual process, taking as much time as both pets need to feel at ease.



How to help a cat who's hiding

On the first day with your new cat, you can anticipate them being cautious and possibly hiding as they adjust to their new surroundings. Allow them to explore at their own pace and engage with you on their terms.

A new cat may hide for only a few hours or up to several days. As time passes and the cat becomes more acclimated to their environment, they will gradually hide less.

Note: Some cats may continue to hide for extended periods, and that's okay! Just be sure that they are eating and using the litter box normally. But if your cat has not eaten in 48 hours, reach out to your vet ASAP because it is a serious medical concern.

Here's what you can do to ease your cat out of hiding.

1. Start with a safe room

When you get home, isolate your cat in one room to allow them to decompress and adjust to how your house sounds and smells. As they become more relaxed there, they may start to show interest in exploring beyond the door. If your cat becomes overwhelmed, backtrack and slow down the pace.

2. Set up a cat-friendly space

Gradually expand their space by closing off other rooms at first. Creating a cat-friendly home can help your kitty acclimate to their new environment faster. This can involve providing cozy sleeping areas, hiding spots, scratching posts, and elevated perches. Offer them access to clean litter boxes in quiet, easily accessible locations. And place their food bowls far away from their litter boxes.



**Better
Together**

3. Allow them to hide

Although you might be tempted to pull your cat out of their hiding place, it's best to let them be. Pulling them out from a hiding spot will exacerbate stress levels, ultimately making them stay in hiding longer. You'll also probably get a few scratches.

4. Let them get used to you

Sit quietly in the room with them while engaging in a calm activity, such as reading a book or working on your laptop. Don't try to pet or play with them — what's most important is your presence, your scent, and allowing your cat to gradually acclimate to your company. The goal is to reassure your cat that you are a safe, calm, and trustworthy presence in their new environment.

5. Teach them to associate you with good things

If your new cat likes wet food or cat treats, push some into their hiding place a few times a day and sit nearby while they eat it. This can help them form positive associations with your presence.

If your cat shows no signs of improvement over two weeks, seek assistance from a veterinarian or a certified cat-behavior consultant to identify possible underlying issues and provide guidance on how to address them.

How to continue nurturing your cat's comfort

Now that you know the basics of helping your nervous Nellie, here are some extra pointers to make your new kitty feel at home.

- **Provide elevated perches:** Installing cat trees, shelves, or window perches allows them to observe their environment while feeling secure.
- **Add familiar scents:** Place bedding or blankets from your cat's previous environment in their new living space to provide a sense of familiarity and ease the transition.
- **Provide hideaways in common areas:** Create hiding spots in common areas for your cat to retreat to if they get overwhelmed.
- **Offer high-value treats:** Use high-value treats, such as freeze-dried chicken breast or a lickable purée treat, to create positive associations and desired behaviors, such as coming out of hiding or approaching you for interaction.
- **Try natural remedies:** If your new cat is particularly anxious or struggling to adjust, consider using a few drops of Rescue Remedy.



- **Use calming pheromones:** A Feliway pheromone plug-in (or spray) uses synthetic pheromones to mimic those naturally produced by cats, helping to create a sense of security and familiarity in their environment. Countless cat parents, shelters, and rescues have used Feliway for its ability to provide comfort and reduce stress during times of transition or anxiety.
- **Minimize stressors:** Establish and maintain a daily routine with consistent feeding, playtime, and litter-box cleaning — all of which ensure stability in their environment.
- **Do not scold them:** Maintain a calm, patient demeanor. Getting upset or scolding them will increase their stress levels, hinder their adjustment progress, and potentially sour your relationship with them.

How do I know my cat is adjusting?

They'll exhibit less hiding behavior, gradually explore their environment, and demonstrate increased confidence, curiosity, and affection. A healthy appetite, regular grooming, and playful behavior are also positive indicators.



Grab your free adopter kit

Tell us about your pet's adoption, and we'll send along special offers and resources to help you settle in together.

