



Adopting a Scared / Under-Socialized Kitten

Socialization takes time—the more you put into it, the better the outcome! Earning the trust of a little shy kitten can be a wonderful and rewarding adventure!

The kitten you are adopting has shown signs of being under-socialized, which means they may not have had much exposure to people when they were younger. Under-socialized kittens can still make wonderful pets — but may need some additional time to get used to you, and may thrive in a calmer household. Below are some tips to get you started — please contact us for more help if you aren't making progress!

Some Tips

- When you first bring your kitty home, confine them to a small safe room (large closet, bathroom or small den area) with a litterbox, food and water, and a few safe hiding places that you can access easily. You don't want to chase them all over the room — and reaching under a bed can be hard — so make sure the only hiding places available are ones that you can reach into easily (such as a carrier with a towel or blanket inside). Let them settle into their new space over the course of several days.
- Move slowly and talk softly when approaching the kitten. Get down closer to their level when possible.
- Use food to make friends! Make sure you feed at set times, so they associate you with food. It may help at first to have just one or two people do this, so the kitten can bond. Try hand-feeding some canned kitten food or kibble when you first approach.
- Use toys to build confidence, for exercise, and as a fun way to bond. The best toys are the interactive kind, like cat-dancers or even shoelaces. This type of toy should not be left alone with a cat or kitten. Also have toys like Ping-Pong balls available for solitary play.
- Handle the kitty often. Pick them up gently, hold or cradle them until they relax in your arms. As they grow more comfortable with you, get them used to being petted all over. When they're older, you will want to be able to trim their nails — get them used to having their paws handled at a young age.



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- Gradually introduce the kitten to the rest of the home under your supervision after they've grown to trust you. One new room at a time is best. If they're overwhelmed, put them back in their safe room.
- Gradually introduce them to new people, instructing guests to approach slow and offer treats.
- It is important to not encourage play-biting. Do not wrestle with your kitten or use your fingers as toys. Cats should learn early on that hands are for petting, not biting. Under socialized kittens can get confused and potentially aggressive if handled incorrectly.
- Make the carrier a nice place! Whatever carrier you choose, keep it out and let the kitty get used to going in and out on their own accord. Cardboard carriers can be laid on their side with a little towel placed inside. You can put little bits of kibble (dry food) in there as treats. This will make necessary trips and veterinarian visits easier on kitty.

Remember: an under socialized kitten is still a kitten! At home, once comfortable (and often at night) they will likely be just as playful and active as other kittens.

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