

## A Safe Room – the secret to your cat’s happiness

See also Jackson Galaxy video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Mr2uOdZj9c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Mr2uOdZj9c)

See also Cat Care Guide ‘What do I need for my cat or kitten’



Your cat will be anxious and unsettled when you take them home as they have been taken from an environment they know to one which looks different and has strange sounds and smells. Cats are territorial so they will want to rub their scent on things to make them their own. They do this by rubbing their cheeks on things or in extreme cases urinating on them. Most cats take at least a week to adjust to new surroundings so even if you think they seem OK, don't be fooled! Some cats are very good at hiding their fears and whilst they may seem keen to get out of their Safe Room

& into the rest of the house, what they're really doing is look for an escape route. The biggest mistake new owners make is letting their cat out into the rest of the house too soon so take things slowly at first...

### Health

Your cat has had a full health check and we will have discussed any concerns with you. However, the change in environment may affect them physically and it's common for them to have an upset tummy &/or diarrhoea. They may not eat for a couple of days, they might not toilet and they might cry at night. All of this is perfectly normal, but if any symptoms persist for more than a few days please contact us.



**Your cat needs a Safe Room** This should be a quiet place with which is pet-proof - ie the doors, windows and fly-screens can be securely closed/fastened. Most laundries and bathrooms are too small and too busy with human traffic and noises and the cat can feel trapped. Ideal rooms are spare bedrooms, offices and studies where the cat has room to move around. If you have other animals in the house avoid turning your bedroom into the cat's Safe Room as this can lead to rivalries developing.



Your cat needs time to get used to being in your house and should be kept in the Safe Room until they are happily interacting with you. This will take at least a week but could be much longer depending on the cat. Later when they are settled into your entire home, this room will still be their panic room - the place where they go when they are scared, when you have visitors over, or when they need to get away for any reason.

**Their Safe Room** has no inaccessible places. You need to block off any 'under' or 'behind' spaces including under a bed, behind furniture etc. The cat will mark everything in this Safe Room with their scent and this will re-assure them that they belong there.

**The Safe Room needs to have** at least one (& ideally two) litter tray(s) and a bowl of water placed at a distance. A sturdy scratching post is a great investment so your cat can stretch, scratch, hide and mark it with their scent. Provide several cosy hiding places so the cat has a choice. Some scratching posts have an integrated hiding box or you can cut some holes in the side of a cardboard box or two and put a soft blanket inside. The cat carrier can also act as a hiding place if you can remove the door, put a soft towel inside and cover it with another blanket or towel. You could also buy a bed that your cat can hide inside – these are called igloo or clam cat beds.



### When you get home – your cat might hide and/or try to escape!

New environments are overwhelming, the cat knows nothing about them and their first instinct will be to hide or escape. When you're not around, the cat will check the whole room both for possible escape routes but also to make sure they are safe from attack. Some cats can get desperate and claw holes in fly screens or bat them until they dislodge from the frame. It's OK to open the window when you are in the room but make sure you close it when you leave – believe it or not even an inch will allow a cat to escape. Once they are satisfied they are safe and there's no way out they will gradually start to relax and make the room their own. Even then it's still really important that you pay attention when opening and closing the door as they will always have one eye on escaping.

- Take the cat carrier straight into the Safe Room, open the door & wedge it open. Drape a towel over the top & part of the way over front so the cat can hide
- Leave the room, close the door and stay out until feeding time
- For the next couple of days go into the room only to feed and scoop the litter & maybe talk softly to the cat. Don't try to find out where they are and don't try to interact with them. At first they might remain hidden and only eat when you're not there so you might not see them at all for a few days. Some cats might be very friendly but just give them one quick stroke and leave it at that for now.
- After a few days if the carrier door is removable take it off. If it isn't, wedge it firmly open.
- If your cat cries at night don't be tempted to get up and pay them attention or feed them because you will create a habit which will be very hard to break. Use earplugs if you need to until you have established routines and your cat feels more settled

- When the cat comes out into the open when you enter the Safe Room you can start playing with them. Try different kinds of toys as different cats have different preferences but DON'T use your hands or fingers! Cats usually like wand toys as they can chase, catch and bunny kick when they catch them



- If they are happy to let you stroke them that's great but if they are still a little shy sit down on the floor and when you take their food in put the bowl next to you and look away. When they will happily eat with you next to them try touching them gently with a finger when they are eating. They might run away but if you take your hand away they will return. When they are eating again slowly try again. If they are receptive, over time you can build up to stroking them. How quickly you progress will depend on how confident the cat has become. High value treats such as cheese or roast chicken might help with this.
- Over the first few weeks it's really important to establish routines with your cat. Give them regular meals at the same time. Don't leave out a bowl of food for them to graze on when they like. When it's time for bed the most important routine is Hunt, Eat, Groom & Sleep. This mimics their natural instincts and should help them to sleep  
Hunt = play with them with a wand toy so they have to chase and catch the toy  
Eat = feed them. (You should now be able to leave them)  
Groom = they will then clean themselves up and go to bed  
Sleep = all night!

### Opening up the Safe Room

- When your cat is comfortable playing with you, is eating in your presence and they have been in their Safe Room for at least a week, they can be introduced to the rest of the house. Choose a quiet time. Be extra mindful that all outside doors and windows are closed and that everyone in the household is aware that you are letting the cat out
- Before you bring them out plant their smell around by bringing out some of the scented signposts they have created in their room – a cushion, a towel, the water bowl, a bed, even their clean litter tray which is a king of scent. Then when come out they will feel welcomed by their own scent and it will reassure them they belong. Later you could leave some items from the rest of the house in their Safe Room for a few days for them to scent mark (you won't be able to smell anything) When you return them to the main house they will be constant reminders that they've been here before.
- Open the door to the Safe Room, walk away and let the cat choose to come out or not. Don't call them or encourage them, just get on with your normal routine but keep an eye on their movements
- The cat might not come out at first. If this is the case close the door to the Safe Room after about half an hour
- The cat might come out a little way and then run back to safety. This is normal
- The cat might come out, wander around sniffing and then go back
- The cat might come out and settle down on one of its scented signposts (cushion, blanket, bed).
- Repeat this process over a few days. If you have a large home introduce your cat gradually to the each area of the house, moving the scent markers as you go. In the first few weeks if you are having visitors or it's going to be noisy it's best to put your cat back into the Safe Room. This place will always be their place of refuge



### Make the most of what space you have especially if you live in an apartment/or rented home

Watch the Jackson Galaxy video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DleF8UxSDWc>



- Provide scratching surfaces for your cat – find out which your cat prefers. Do they like to scratch horizontally or vertically or at an angle? A scratching post should be big enough for your cat to stretch the full length of their body and pull down with their claws. You can also smaller cardboard scratchers

- You might be able to create 'superhighways' with your furniture so your cat can move around without touching the floor eg from bookcase, to chair, to shelf. You can put up a tension-mounted pole between the floor and the ceiling for them to scratch on and climb; use cat hammocks on windows; provide several flat cat mats or blankets that the cat can scent and you can move around; build a patio on your balcony or bring the outside in with cat grass and water fountains to stimulate the cat



Depending on your situation the following Cat Care Guides on our website may be useful

[www.safeanimalrehomeing.com.au/other-services/education-library/](http://www.safeanimalrehomeing.com.au/other-services/education-library/)

*This advice is to be used as a general guide only. SAFE Animal Rehomeing does not accept responsibility for any circumstance which may arise from reliance on the information given*

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