

## Cat Won't Go Upstairs

**CatChannel behavior expert Marilyn Krieger, CCBC, explains why unfamiliar surroundings can be frightening for a cat.**

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**Q:** Two days ago we adopted a 4-year-old Himalayan cat from a foster family. He stays downstairs in our family room, but most of the time he hides under a couch. He recognizes my husband and me now, but he is afraid to go upstairs. He just stops at the bottom of the stairs. What should we do to encourage him to explore the rest of a house?

**A:** Unfamiliar surroundings can overwhelm a new cat. Most cats are frightened when they are first introduced to their new home, sometimes taking refuge under the bed or the couch for days.

As a general rule, it's a good idea to introduce new cats gradually to their new environments by confining them in one room until they feel secure and build bonds with their new human companions. But, there are exceptions. Some cats are not very fearful and would rather explore the rest of the house than be confined into one room.

Since your new little cat is frightened by the unfamiliar smells, sights and sounds, I recommend that you confine him in one room for a couple of days. The room should have his food, water, litterbox, toys, a comfortable place to sleep, a window to look out of and regular visits from you and your husband. Become the most important beings in his world. Every time you visit him, give him a delicious treat and interact with him at a level that he is comfortable with. After he feels a little braver, open the door and allow him to venture into other areas of the house on his own volition. Some cats will first walk around the perimeter of each room; sniffing and checking everything out, others will hide under the furniture. Keep the door to his room open so that he can run back into the safety of the room if he becomes startled or frightened. As your kitty feels a little more secure, he will become braver and venture upstairs. You can also help the process along by putting favorite treats on the stairs.