



Safe Haven

A safe haven is an important place for your cat to have within the home. This can be a place to help fearful cats feel more comfortable, give reactive or high arousal cats a temporary place to be removed from triggers, or just a place that your cat can go to during the day when they feel like being alone.

Creating a Safe Haven

Create an area for your cat to go to that enables them to be able to remove themselves and be alone. The area should be somewhere that is quiet and more removed from the rest of the home; should be a very comfortable place to be; and include things such as a bed, pillows, toys, a litterbox, places to hide, and vertical space. You can choose to feed them their meals in this space and give them toys that they can play with exclusively when they are in their safe haven. When introducing them to the new safe haven space, give them lots of treats and feed them incrementally to help build a positive association with the space.

For Fearful Cats

Many fearful cats will benefit from having a safe haven to be able to have space to remove themselves if/when they feel overwhelmed. This could be during a thunderstorm, when there are new and unfamiliar people over, if there's a lot of activity in the home, or any time that the cat is feeling stressed. Follow the guidelines above for making the space comfortable and helping your fearful cat acclimate to their safe haven. Once they have acclimated to this space, keep access to it open for them at all times, and you will see they should start going to it on their own when needed.

For Reactive or High Arousal Cats

Creating a safe haven can also be a key part of a reactive or high arousal cat's management within the home. If your cat is reactive to certain stimuli, it can sometimes be impossible or impractical to avoid their triggers, such as novel people coming to the home, children, people at the door, etc. If/When these triggers occur, lead your cat to their safe haven, ideally before they begin reacting. For example, you might set your cat up in their safe haven before your guests even come over. When in their safe haven, either give your cat their meal, or give them treats via a puzzle toy, or give them toys that they will play with by themselves. You want to set them up to be able to keep themselves entertained and busy the entire time they're in the safe haven, if they do not fall asleep while they are there.