



Tips for Trapping Tricky Cats

- **Get them comfortable with the trap:** Feed your colony cats inside of an untriggered trap in their normal feeding locations for a week or two before trapping. Place the food near the entrance of the trap and gradually move it closer and toward the back of the trap each day. If you have a trap with a double door, remove the back door and feed the cats in the center of the trap. This way, the cats can easily pass through and not feel contained.
 - **Use a larger trap:** Cats don't like to feel trapped or boxed in. A larger trap with a taller opening and wider sides can be more inviting to a cat who is wary of entering an enclosed space.
 - **Cover the trap:** By placing a dark towel over the trap without blocking the door, you create a space that looks dark, hidden and safe for cats.
 - **Try more exciting bait:** Something smelly, tasty and perhaps out of the ordinary, might catch a cat's interest. Jarred baby food (onion free), canned mackerel, fried chicken (no skin, no bone), anchovies or sardines all work great.
 - **Make a food trail:** Coax wary cats into the trap with a trail of food scraps leading up to and then inside the trap. Make sure you don't use too much – you don't want the cat to get full before they reach the trigger plate! You can also try using the smelly broth of canned cat food or meat as your bait trail.
 - **Change the trap's location:** Move the trap to a quiet, protected place so the cat feels safe going into it. The more secluded and the less people around, the better.
 - **Observe habits:** Be observant and watch for the trails that cats most often take. Note if there is a certain tree or bush they like to sleep under and what time of day they are most likely to be in a specific area. Set up the traps at those places and during those times.
 - **Use distraction techniques:** Some cats can be guided into a trap with a laser pointer, which you can control from a distance. If you have trapped a mom cat and not her kittens, you can keep the mom cat in the trap near the empty traps while you wait for the kittens to go in. Sometimes, if you place the traps next to each other, the kittens will think they can go in to be closer to mom. You can also do this to trap a mom cat when you have already caught the kittens. The meow of the other cat will attract the ones who still need to be trapped.
 - **Camouflage the trap:** Try covering the trap with natural material like burlap. Then, place leaves, small branches, palm fronds or whatever is available in the natural environment around the top, sides and on the floor inside the trap. Just make sure your disguise doesn't interfere with the trap door closing! Run a test before setting it up for trapping.
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- **Hide the trip plate:** A cat may learn to recognize the plate that closes the trap door and how to avoid it. To keep them from tiptoeing over and around the plate, try covering the plate and the floor around it with newspaper or cloth. Or, cut a piece of cardboard narrower than the width of your trap and a couple of inches longer than the trigger plate. Tape the cardboard to the middle of the plate and loosely to the floor of the trap.
- **Put a stick in it:** For cats that have learned to step lightly to avoid triggering traps, slide a stick through the side holes of the trap just in front of the trigger plate and a few inches off the trap floor. The cat will be forced to step over the stick and their paw will land harder on the trigger plate just beyond it, springing the trap.
- **Spring the trap yourself:** Prop the box trap door open with a stick or a full water bottle with string tied to it. Use enough string so you can hide a few feet away and hold the end of it. When the cat walks into the trap, pull the string to manually shut the door.
- **Use a drop trap:** If the standard box trap isn't working, try using a drop trap like shown in the video on our webpage. It is a large mesh box that you prop up and trigger manually with a rope or string. Make sure to set the drop trap on flat ground and have a partner assist you because the size of the trap makes it difficult to handle alone. Prop the trap up with a wooden stick or a full water bottle tied with string, leaving enough string so you can hide a few feet away and hold the end of it. Bait the trap with plenty of food just in case other cats and small animals are tempted to sneak a bite. Don't spring the trap until your target cat is inside. If they see other cats being trapped, they will stay away! Once you have sprung the trap and caught the cat you want, immediately place a sheet over it and get a box trap ready. Transfer the cat to the box trap for an easier hold and transport.
- **Go high-tech:** If a shy kitten or a mom cat refuses to enter a trap, your cellphone may help! Find a video of kittens meowing and play it on your phone, then place the phone at the back of your box or drop trap. Kittens who are scared and alone may race to join the other kittens in the trap. The mom cat may think her kittens are calling for her and enter the trap to find them. You can also try the sound of a can opening or birds chirping!
- **Take a break from trapping:** Unless the cat is in need of immediate medical attention, take a break for a week or two. Give yourself and the cat a rest and then try again. You will get them eventually and don't want to continually stress the cat out.

