



## Charlotte 279974: What to Expect

**Charlotte is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home.** Charlotte is a beautiful, playful, independent girl who is ready to find her forever home. Charlotte will need someone experienced with feline body language, who is looking for a beautiful cat to admire and play with, but not necessarily wanting a snuggle bug. Charlotte needs a quiet home with a patient, calm person. She will also need to go to a home where there is a resident cat, one that is already pro-social with people, to help build her confidence. She would not do well in a home with a lot of activity, visitors, or one with children.

Charlotte came from a home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver. In her previous home, she had a lot of exposure to other cats but not a lot of human interactions. During her time in the Behavior Modification Program, we have seen Charlotte become a silly, happy girl who will readily engage with toys, jumping in the air to catch them, pouncing on toy mice, playing with the laser pointer, lounging in the best sunspots, and snuggling with feline companions. While Charlotte's confidence with people has grown, (sitting close by people, engaging with toys, and eating treats offered by people), she continues to be hesitant about being touched with hands. Once a bond and relationship are formed with people, she does enjoy being pet for short periods of time. She allows multiple team members that she has known for the last few months to pet her, leaning into each cheek and chin scratch. It is recommended when first befriending Charlotte to utilize a Touch Tool which she readily leans into and rubs on. A Touch Tool is a great way to build a bond with her before attempting to touch her with your hands. Anything that can be considered an extension of your hand will work as a Touch Tool (backscratcher, pen, paint brush). She loves being with other cats and would make a great companion for a family that has a resident cat looking for a new friend.

Her new family should expect that she will hide for a few weeks, possibly longer. You'll need to introduce her to new things slowly. Charlotte typically flees and hides when overwhelmed or scared. It's important to provide her with a small room with appropriate hiding spots for her to relax in, such as her own hidey bed. Hiding spots that are confined to a tight spot and out of reach from you will make it difficult to build a bond with her. The room you set her up in will be the catalyst for how quickly she acclimates. Start thinking now which room in your home would be best for Charlotte to settle into. If it's a bedroom, can she get under the bed or dresser making it difficult to spend time with her? If it's a laundry room or bathroom will the constant in and out of people and noises associated with these rooms be too much for her? By having a room without a lot of foot traffic and with appropriate hiding spots, it will allow you to work on building a relationship. While in her hiding spot, use calm voices and offer tasty treats to show you are not a threat. Place a small amount of a wet food on a spoon and offer it to Charlotte while in her hidey spot. Or toss her a few crunchy treats. Bring the laser pointer or wand toy out and allow her to observe and engage with it. Over time, by continuing to do this, Charlotte will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two. A Touch Tool should be introduced to her before trying to touch her with your hands. A Touch Tool is a great way to build a bond with her before using your hands to pet him. Anything that can be considered an extension of your hand will work as a Touch Tool (backscratcher, pen, paint brush).

### **Here's how to help Charlotte during your first months together:**

**This step is crucial in helping Charlotte acclimate to her new home. Confine Charlotte to one cat-proof room in your house.** Provide Charlotte with a litter box, food, water, and a bed. Ensure she cannot get to *inappropriate* hiding spots (under the bed, in a closet, on top of a cabinet, etc.). Provide her with a safe, comfortable hiding place instead like her cat carrier, a hidey-bed, or a large dog crate covered with a blanket.

**Spend time with Charlotte in her room.** Don't force her out of her hiding spot. Instead, encourage her to come out on her own using happy talk, offering treats or toys. Once she is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to interact with you, you can start introducing her to the rest of your home. Start by propping the door open and allowing her to come out on her own. Don't force it! If you come across something that you can tell Charlotte is worried about, allow her to hang back or hide if she chooses to do so.

**Continue to provide a safe space.** Even when Charlotte has started exploring the rest of the house, give her a safe space that she can retreat to. When she is in her safe space, insist that guests leave her alone and try to ignore her yourself. That way, when she comes out, you can reward her bravery with your attention.

**No visitors (at first).** Allow Charlotte time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing her to new people. When you have visitors over, give Charlotte the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore her – or if Charlotte seems curious or interested, have the new person toss her treats or offer a favorite toy. We want exciting, good things to come from new people.

**Practice crate training.** Leave her carrier out all the time, so it's just a part of her normal environment. Add a bed and keep the door securely propped open so she can go in and out on her own, making sure the door won't swing shut and frighten her. You can also clicker train her to run into the carrier on cue. Helping Charlotte get comfortable with her carrier will make it easier when it's time to visit the vet.

**Visiting the vet:** Unless it's an emergency, give Charlotte time to bond to you before taking her to the vet. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if she already trusts you, your presence may help her feel more comfortable.

Patience will come in handy for you. Charlotte is a cat that needs an understanding owner who has the time and desire to allow her to adapt in her own time. She may never be a social butterfly, and that's okay! Getting to know her and watching her come out of her shell will be extremely rewarding. Celebrate those small victories.

## **We're here to help!**

We want Charlotte to be successful in her new home. We're available to answer questions via phone and email. Call the Behavior Helpline at (503)416-2983 or email Erika at [erikas@oregonhumane.org](mailto:erikas@oregonhumane.org) to connect with the Feline Services Manager.

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you and Charlotte now and in the future. Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns – or just to give an update. We love to see photos and hear how our friends are doing!

Thank you for adopting from the Oregon Humane Society. Congratulations on your new cat!

