



Wesley 174038: What to Expect

Wesley is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Wesley is a shy, sweet boy who is ready to find his forever home. Wesley needs an understanding owner that is experienced with feline body language and has the time and desire to allow him to acclimate in his own time. Wesley may never be a social butterfly with everyone he meets, but he will bond with his new family when given the time he needs to acclimate.

Wesley was surrendered by his previous family due to him not getting along with the other cat in the home. He was in that home for 8 years, and during that time the relationship between him and the other cat in the home deteriorated causing Wesley to pick fights with the other cat. His family loved him very much but felt it best to find a new home for Wesley. His previous family describe him as an independent, shy, but playful boy who enjoys all kinds of treats, playing with toys and watching wildlife outside.

When he first arrived at OHS, he displayed fearful behavior in his kennel, cowering in the back and was avoidant of handling by the staff. Wesley never showed aggressive behavior towards people, but it was clear that the shelter environment was overwhelming for him due to his shy, fearful behavior. It was then decided to place him in the Behavior Modification Program. This program would allow us to work with him on feeling more comfortable in our presence.

Wesley settled into the routine of the BMOD program quickly and within a few days he stopped hiding and instead started hanging out on his cat tower and observing the activities around him. He is motivated by food, so we used treats to build a positive association with people. Wesley also responds well to verbal encouragement. Sitting near him, speaking softly, and offering slow eye blinks gave Wesley the confidence needed to trust us even more. As soon as he learned we were not a threat, Wesley started soliciting attention and accepting cheek and chin scratches. He also loves to play with toys and as we soar the wand toy through the air he would track it, chase, and pounce on it with great delight. Wesley is a calm and reserved kitty who is not overly needy and is happy to just chill and hang out. Wesley will need to be in a calm home where he is the only cat. He may do ok with safe outdoor access on his own terms.

His new family should expect that he will hide for a few weeks, possibly longer. You'll need to introduce him to new things slowly. Wesley typically flees and hides when overwhelmed or scared. If cornered, he may hiss, cower, and swat so it's important to not overwhelm him as he adjusts to his new home. It's important to provide him with a small room with appropriate hiding spots for him to relax in, such as his 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 him. **He should not be given access to the whole home setting until he has acclimated to one room. The room you set him up in will be the catalyst for how quickly he acclimates.** Start thinking now which room in your home would be best for Wesley to settle into. If it's a bedroom, can he get under the bed or dresser making it difficult to spend time with him? 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 him? 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 his hiding spot, use calm voices and offer tasty treats to show you are not a threat. Place a small amount of a wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Wesley while in his hidey spot. Or toss him a few crunchy treats. Bring the laser pointer or wand toy out and allow him to observe and engage with it. Over time, by continuing to do this, Wesley will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

Here's how to help Wesley during your first months together:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We're here to help!

We want Wesley to be successful in his 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 to connect with the Feline Services Manager.

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you and Wesley 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!