



Simba 320680: What to Expect

Simba is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Simba is a sweet, sensitive boy who needs time to build trust and confidence with new people. Once he knows who his friends are, he is social and loves being pet and will purr and purr.

Simba was transferred from another shelter after they reached out to OHS asking if we could help them. While at the previous shelter, Simba displayed fearful, cautious behavior and the staff felt they did not have the capacity or resources to help him. We agreed to take him, and to help set him up for success he was placed in our Behavior Modification Program. The environment in the BMOD program is better suited at helping cats feel comfortable in a shelter environment. With the larger kennel space, access to windows, quieter atmosphere and increased one on one time with the team we set out to learn more about him.

When he arrived at OHS, he displayed fearful behavior, crouching low, and hiding in his kennel for the first few days. We would gently talk to him and encourage him to come out from hiding. As he learned we were not a threat he started engaging in social and friendly behavior with the team. Simba acclimated fairly quickly to the routine and the staff in the BMOD program. He displayed relaxed body language when he was alone, resting in his kennel, and the cautious, fearful behavior he initially displayed dissipated as he learned we were his friends. He would rub on our legs, soliciting attention, purring and headbutt for attention. He started exploring the larger space outside of his kennel and would walk cautiously around checking out all the new things. Simba has met several other kitties here and does fine with them. He would do fine co-existing with another cat but would also do fine as the only cat in his new home. What Simba needed was a calm environment and time to observe his surroundings without being put in overwhelming situations and the BMOD environment was able to provide him with that. Simba is a social, yet sensitive boy who needs time to build relationships with people and feel safe.

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. Simba typically cowers or hides when overwhelmed or scared. If cornered, he will 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 Simba 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 Simba 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, Simba will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

This step is crucial in helping Simba acclimate to his new home. Confine Simba to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Simba 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 Simba 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 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 Simba is worried about, allow him to hang back or hide if he chooses to do so.

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Simba 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 Simba time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing him to new people. When you have visitors over, give Simba the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore him – or if Simba 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 Simba 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 Simba 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. Simba 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 Simba 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 Behavior Modification Manager.

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