



## Leo 329904: What to Expect

Leo is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Leo is a sensitive yet sweet boy who is ready to find his forever home. Leo can be nervous in new settings and with new people, but if you have the time and patience to help him you will end up with a sweet, lovable boy.

Leo came to OHS from another shelter and we do not have much history on him. When he arrived, he displayed fearful behavior that resulted in him cowering, hiding and displaying avoidant behavior to the staff when they attempted to engage with him. He was so overwhelmed with the shelter environment and the loud noises associated with it that the decision was made to place him 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 and help him overcome his fears.

Leo acclimated very quickly to the BMOD program. The quieter environment and a few days to watch and observe was all he needed to build trust with the staff. We found early on that Leo enjoyed playing with wand toys and as we soared the toy through the air he would watch, stalk and pounce on it with great delight. He also enjoyed treats anytime we offered them. Now that Leo is comfortable in his environment he is social and engaging with people. He regularly seeks out attention, meows and headbutts to show his love for us. Leo has met several other kitties here and does well with them. He is a gentle, sensitive boy who deserves lots of love and patience. Leo will do best in a quiet, calm home and may enjoy having a cat friend. A kitty friend that likes to relax and snuggle and not one that wants to rough and tumble play with him.

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. Leo typically flees and hides when overwhelmed or scared. 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. 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 Leo 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 wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Leo while in his hidey spot. Over time, by continuing to do this, Leo will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

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

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Leo 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 Leo time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing him to new people. When you have visitors over, give Leo the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore him – or if Leo 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 Leo 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 Leo 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. Leo 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 Leo 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](mailto:erikas@oregonhumane.org) to connect with the Feline Behavior Modification Manager.

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