



## Marzipan 330751: What to Expect

Marzipan is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Marzipan is a sensitive yet sweet boy who is ready to find his forever home. Marzipan 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. Marzipan 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.

Marzipan came to OHS from the home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver. 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.

When he first arrived in the Behavior Modification program, Marzipan would continuously hide and cower in his bed. He would stare at us with wide eyes and tremble anytime we approached him. We sat calmly in his kennel, offering verbal encouragement and slow eye blinks to help him understand we were his friends. When we offered our hand for him to sniff, he would shrink back and cower. For several weeks, we would gently encourage him with soft voices that we were his friend and offer him treats to build a positive association with us. Churus are his favorite, and as he started to realize we were the ones supplying him with yummy treats, his body language began to relax. As time went on, he started accepting our approaching hand and would allow us to give him cheek and chin scratches. It took some time, but now he LOVES being pet and will lean into our hands and purr loudly from the affection. We also allowed him to meet several other kitties and he showed curiosity and interest in them. Due to his interest in the other cats, we moved him into the Sunroom, which is a communal cat room where he could live with other cats 24/7. Being with the other cats helped him to feel more confident and comfortable in his environment and we often find him snuggled up with the other cats. Marzipan also started to play with feather wand toys, and he loves to bat and pounce on them. Marzipan continues to have moments where he is nervous and may hide or cower, but he recovers quickly with soft voices and treats. While Marzipan has made great progress here, his new family should expect to continue working on building trust and confidence with him. He is a gentle, sensitive boy who deserves lots of love and patience. Marzipan will do best in a quiet, calm home with 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. Marzipan 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 Marzipan 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 Marzipan while in his hidey spot. Over time, by continuing to do this, Marzipan will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

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

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