



Katana 331480: What to Expect

Katana is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Katana is a shy but sweet girl who needs a family that has the time and desire to allow her to acclimate in her own time. Once she feels comfortable and knows she is safe, she is social, engaging and loves being pet. Katana will bond with her new family when given the time she needs to acclimate.

Katana was found as a stray and we don't have much history on her. When she first arrived, she displayed fearful/shy behavior but was quickly adopted out into a home. A month later she was returned due to a change in the owner's lifestyle. When she came back to OHS, she continued to display fearful behavior, crouching low in her kennel, hissing and swatting any time the staff attempted to handle her. She startled easily with any loud noise and this would cause her to become even more scared. Due to her fearful behavior, the decision was made to place her 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 environment and increased one on one time with the team we set out to learn more about her and help her overcome her fears.

Katana was nervous for the first several days in BMOD and spent most of her time watching us with wide eyes. She would hiss as staff approached, but it never escalated beyond that. It was just her way of communicating that she was scared. We would sit in her kennel, offer slow eye blinks and talk softly to let her know we were not a threat. Each visit consisted of us leaving treats to help build a positive association with people. After a few days she started to relax towards our presence and started accepting cheek and chin scratches. She showed curiosity and interest in the other cats in the BMOD program and that's when we decided to let her have playdates with some of them. We noticed she became more confident and comfortable with her surroundings any chance she had being around other cats. She then moved into our Sunroom, which is a communal room, where she could live with other cats 24/7. While in this room, we watched and observed as she climbed the cat towers to look out the windows and snuggle with the other kitties. The staff also sat in this room with her, offering a calm presence, verbal encouragement and tasty treats which she readily accepted from us. What Katana needed was a quieter environment than what the main shelter could provide and now that she feels safe, she is the sweet, social, playful girl we all knew she could be. While Katana has made great progress here, she continues to startle easily when a loud noise occurs, but recovers quickly with verbal encouragement, treats and toys. Her new family should expect to give her plenty of time to acclimate to her new home. She will do best in a calm environment with a resident kitty to have as a friend, one that is happy to relax and snuggle and not one that wants to rough and tumble play.

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. Katana typically runs and hides when overwhelmed or scared, so it's important to not overwhelm her as she adjusts to her new home. 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. She should not be given access to the whole home setting until she has acclimated to one room. 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 Katana 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 or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Katana 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, Katana will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

Here's how to help Katana during your first month together:

This step is crucial in helping Katana acclimate to her new home. Confine Katana to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Katana 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. Once she is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to play with toys, you can start introducing her to the rest of your home.

Spend time with Katana 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 a Touch Tool, 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 Katana is worried about, allow her to hang back or hide if she chooses to do so.

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

Katana 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 with everyone she meets but she will bond with her new family. 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 Katana 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 to connect with the Feline Behavior Modification Manager.

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