



Sonja 338823: What to Expect

Sonja is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home. Sonja is a sensitive and sweet gal looking to share her passion of sampling cheese! Tasty snacks are the way to this girl's heart, along with slow paced walks for sniffing and gentle petting. The last few months of Sonja's life have been traumatic for such a sensitive soul. She found her way into OHS's care when her owner passed. She was well loved and cared for and is looking for her next loving home. Sonja is adjusting to a new way of life here in the shelter, which has been very overwhelming. She is looking for a quiet home and a warm spot on the couch. As she adjusts to her new home, her new family can expect her to be low activity, a little distant, and shy with touch. With time, Sonja will learn to trust her new family and relax into her new routine. We expect that Sonja will be overwhelmed by everything they encounter at first. During the critical first months in a new home, their safety will depend on your good judgment and forethought. **A frightened dog will look for any occasion to bolt when startled: out of vehicles, out the front door, or slipping out of the leash. Keep a very tight grip of that leash!**

In her previous home Sonja was noted to live with another dog. We have seen at OHS she has been indifferent to other dogs, neither soliciting them for attention nor driving them away. It's possible she could live in a home with another dog, and the ideal match would be another social, confident, and calm dog like herself. A pet meet is required before adoption. She is untested with cats. Due to her sensitive nature, we believe she would do best in a home without small children, as their loud noises and sudden movements could frighten her more. She would do best in a low traffic and quiet home.

Here's how to help Sonja settle in during your first months together:

Designate a "safe spot" in your home. You can use a crate or taller baby gates to confine them to a smaller area where they have access to water, bed, and toys. When you are unable to supervise the dog, leave them in their safe spot. Slowly work toward leaving them alone, unsecured, once they've had the chance to settle into your home and you know with certainty, they will be comfortable.

Be your dog's advocate. It's okay to ask someone to stop or prevent a person from letting their dog come up to say hi to your dog. Watch their body language and help your dog out of situations if they appear stressed. Explain that Sonja is not comfortable with people and doesn't enjoy meeting strangers while on their walk. Tossing a treat on the ground is more effective for your dog to make positive associations with new people. Distance is calming.

Allow for time to build trust. Always let Sonja decide if they want to come closer to you. Don't force interactions. As they grow more comfortable, you will see Sonja decide that they enjoy spending time with you by coming closer for pets, jumping next to you on the couch, and following your resident dog around.

Supervise your dog outside. Even if you have a fenced yard, please do not let Sonja out alone. They are small and could easily hide under your deck or a bush - or slip through a gap in your fence! They do like to go for short walks and go outside to potty but need some time to build confidence to go on longer excursions in even the quietest of neighborhoods.

Limit introductions to new people. Take your time to get to know Sonja before introducing them to someone new. They may need to meet a new person multiple times before feeling comfortable with strangers. Treats and allowing Sonja to approach as they feel comfortable will be best. New people should just completely ignore Sonja at first – playing hard to get is the way to their heart.

Use routine to get Sonja comfortable in their new home. It will take a couple weeks for Sonja to feel comfortable in their new home and with you. Having a predictable schedule will help them adjust to their new home.

When you have people over, **it's okay to put Sonja in another room.** If you'd like Sonja to meet a guest, put them on a leash and give them time to adjust before allowing your guest to pet. Let it be Sonja's choice to go to them for pets or hang back and watch. Crowding Sonja or forcing them to interact can make fearful behavior worse.

Use treats and toys to build trust. Maintaining and continuing Sonja's training will create a bond and a form of communication between two species who don't understand each other. The more positive experiences Sonja has with their owners, the more valuable you will become in high distracting situations.

Patience will come in handy for you. Sonja responds best to positive reinforcement and reward-based training. They will need an understanding, calm owner who has the time and desire to work on helping them learn to live in a home. Sonja will pay you back by supplying love and enthusiasm!

Don't take Sonja to busy places where they will have lots of uncontrolled interactions with people/dogs (such as Saturday Market, off-leash dog parks, coffee shops, walks down Hawthorne St., Home Depot, etc.).

Visiting the Vet: Unless it's an emergency, give your dog plenty of time to bond to you before taking them to your vet. Start with positive visits just for treats. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if your dog already trusts you, your presence may help them feel more comfortable.

Try using **Adaptil (Dog Appeasing Pheromone)** or **Rescue Remedy by Bach Flower Essences.** These products may help dogs settle in new environments by easing the stress associated with change.

We're here to help!

We want Sonja to be successful in your home. We're available to answer questions via phone and email. During your first two months with Sonja, we can also set up a free one-on-one consultation. For questions or to schedule an appointment, contact us at **(503) 285-1145** or BMODTrainers@oregonhumane.org.

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you now and in the future. Reach out if you have 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 dog!