



Archie 341344: What to Expect

Archie is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Archie is a shy and sensitive boy who is ready to find his forever home. Archie 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. Archie may never be a social butterfly with everyone he meets, but he will bond with someone when given the time he needs to get to know you.

Archie came to OHS due to his previous owner being unable to properly care for him. In his previous home he was described as being shy with new people but with time, he became very affectionate towards his owner. When he arrived at OHS he displayed fearful, shy behavior that would present itself as hissing, swatting and attempting to bite if we got too close to him. Due to his fearful behavior, 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, increased enrichment, and one on one time with the team we set out to learn more about him.

Over the last several weeks, we have worked with Archie to build a relationship with him. He is nervous with fast or loud movements but responds well to verbal encouragement and slow movements. He is very good at communicating when he is nervous and would often growl to tell us we were too close. We sat close by him offering words of encouragement and treats to let him know we were not a threat. We quickly learned that Churus were his favorite and soon his body language relaxed and he began to enjoy when staff visited. We rewarded every positive interaction we had with Archie using treats and as he acclimated to the environment, he started seeking out attention and leaning into cheek and chin scratches. Archie is now comfortable in his environment and with the staff and volunteers that care for him.

Archie has met several kitties here and has shown cautious curiosity with them. In his previous home, he lived with other cats and had positive interactions with female cats but a mixed history with male cats. Archie doesn't necessarily need a kitty friend in his new home, just someone willing to be patient with him and help him acclimate. If there is another kitty in his new home, slow introductions should be done to help set them both up for success. He will do best in a calm, quiet home with someone that is patient with him. Archies' favorite activities are snacking on Churus, being pet, taking naps, and playing with toys. If you have a soft spot for sweet, sensitive yet brave kitties, then Archie is the one you've been looking for.

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. Archie typically flees, hisses and swats 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 Archie 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 Archie while in his hidey spot. Over time, by continuing to do this, Archie will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

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

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