



Lexi 343480: What to Expect

Lexi is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home. Lexi can be sweet and reserved girl who would love nothing more than curling up on the couch with you to watch your favorite TV shows or doom scroll on those rainy days. When uncertain and uncomfortable, she can be reserved and shy, but once she has a chance to settle in and trust her environment and handlers, she is playful and affectionate. Her history prior to coming into the shelter is a mystery and during her time at OHS. Once comfortable she is an affectionate and playful dog who loves zooming around the yard, romping with dogs, and rolling over for belly rubs. When uncomfortable she will try to create space by avoiding interactions and observing her surroundings, and if cornered or forced further for interactions may growl, flash teeth, or snap in attempts to create space. By taking things slow, building trust, and giving Lexi time to decompress she has learned to trust staff and volunteers for walks, handling, and medical exams. We expect that Lexi 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!**

During her time at OHS we've had the opportunity to introduce Lexi to other dogs to gauge her comfort and sociability. Lexi has shown that she can be neutral around dogs, neither overly engaging nor attempting to keep dogs away. When comfortable, she becomes a playful pup who loves to run around the yard with other social and confident dogs. She can be picky about her canine companions at first. Slow introductions and having her own space will be important for her to adjust to a home with a resident dog. A pet meet is required before adoption to ensure personality compatibility if there is a resident dog in the home.

Here's how to help Lexi 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 Lexi is not comfortable with strange new 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.

Let them drag a leash attached to their collar for the first week or two inside and outside the home. Fast movements are startling, and it will take time for them to be okay with you approaching and removing the leash. If you go slow at the beginning, you’ll build a trusting relationship. Treats always help!

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

Allow for time to build trust. Always let Lexi decide if they want to come closer to you. Don't force interactions. As they grow more comfortable, you will see Lexi 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.

Skip the dog park. Don't take Lexi to busy places where they will have lots of uncontrolled interactions with people or other dogs (such as Saturday Market, dog parks, coffee shops, etc.). Lexi has shown us they don't have an interest in being around a lot of other people. Taking leashed hikes to the river, playing in the backyard, or to places not frequented by many other people or off leash dogs will allow for exercise, but keep Lexi calm and engaged with you.

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

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

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

“Puppy proof” your home and practice tether training to prevent them from getting into puppy/adolescent trouble. When home have Lexi on leash, attached to you or tethered to a large piece of furniture as you go about your daily routine. This will help with potty training, bonding, and creating boundaries within the home. Let Lexi drag the leash around the house or yard from time to time to simulate “freedom”, but do not let them off leash until they can 100% be trusted not to get into things they shouldn't. This could take up to a few weeks. Crate Lexi when you cannot watch them. This will ensure their puppy curiosity doesn't get them into any trouble. You will have long lasting success if you follow this method.

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.

We're here to help!

We want Lexi to be successful in your home. We're available to answer questions via phone and email. During your first two months with Lexi, 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.