



Jack 345050 and Hootin 344981: What to Expect

Jack and Hootin are graduates of the Behavior Modification Program and need a specific home. Jack and Hootin are bonded kitties who can be fearful and shy with new people and in busy, chaotic environments. They bring a lot of comfort to each other and will need to find a home together. Once they feel comfortable with their surroundings, their playful, sweet and social personalities shine through. Their new owner should expect to be patient with them as they acclimate to their new home.

Jack and Hootin came from different situations, and we do not have much history on them. Jack came to OHS from another shelter, while Hootin was found in an abandoned home. When both of them arrived, they were housed in separate kennels and both displayed fearful, shy behavior towards staff. They would hide and cower when staff approached, and hiss or swat if they felt threatened. The busy chaotic shelter environment was overwhelming for them so the decision was made to place them 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 them.

Hootin was the first to come to the BMOD program and for the first few weeks he spent most of his time hiding in his bed and watching us with wide eyes. In the beginning, he would cower, hide and hiss if we got too close, but we understood this was his way of communicating he was scared. We would talk softly to him every day and leave treats in his kennel to build a positive association with people. As he started to understand we were not a threat, his body language relaxed and he began to eat the treats that we offered in our presence, his favorite treats are Churu treats! As he started to be more relaxed in our presence, Hootin began to watch toys with interest. As we waved the wand toy in the air, he would stalk it from his hiding spot and get bursts of bravery and bat at the toy.

Hootin also had opportunities to observe other cats in the BMOD program, as the kennel area includes a larger shared space where cats can leave their enclosures to explore and socialize together. When other cats were out playing, Hootin showed curiosity and interest in what they were doing. We thought that giving him the opportunity to explore this space alongside more confident cats in the program might help him build confidence and develop trust.

When Jack arrived in the BMOD program a few weeks after Hootin, he preferred to sit atop a high perch in his kennel and observe us. If we entered his kennel he would hiss and tremble, or dart away to hide. We noticed right away that he showed interest in the other kitties in the program. After only a few days in the program he was sitting at the front of his kennel, chirping at the kitties that were having playdates. He observed us interacting and playing with these kitties, and he began to realize we weren't a threat. He still moved away when we approached him with our hands too quickly, but as we sat with him and spoke softly and offered treats and toys, he began to build a positive association with us. We decided to introduce him to the other kitties in the program, and we saw that he really enjoyed the company of other kitties. As we engaged with the other kitties by waving wand toys through the air, he would stalk it, chasing and pouncing on it with great delight. As he played with the wand toy, jumping and catching it skillfully with his large polydactyl paws, Hootin watched with intrigue from the safety of his own kennel.

Hootin cautiously came out to explore, and he immediately approached Jack and gave him a soft, sweet head butt. An instant companionship was born. They quickly became inseparable, walking side by side with their tails gently entwined, affectionately head butting each other as they explored the larger area together. This newfound comradery brought them both a lot of comfort, and they began to get braver. With support and reassurance from each other, Jack and Hootin began to approach us. Jack was the first to allow pets, and as Hootin stood by his side and watched, he realized it might also be safe for him to receive pets. Soon he was head butting and soliciting for his own pets. We could see that being together brought both of them a lot of comfort. When we would put them back in their respective kennels at the

end of the day, we could see that being separated caused them distress. Hootin would sit at his kennel door, meowing for his companion and Jack would meow back in response.

We knew that Jack and Hootin were kindred spirits so the decision was made to house them in the same kennel together while in BMOD. We saw immediately that having them together brought a lot of comfort to both of them as they snuggled and groomed each other.

Jack and Hootin are now very comfortable with the staff here at the shelter and enjoy playing with toys, exploring, and climbing into laps for love. They play with all kinds of toys and will need a family that can provide them with a lot of enrichment. Jack and Hootin love each other very much and will need to find a home together. What Jack and Hootin needed was a quiet and calm environment, and each other, before they felt safe enough to engage with people. If you have the patience and time to help them acclimate then you will end up with the sweetest duo!

Their new family should expect that they will hide for a few weeks, possibly longer. You'll need to introduce them to new things slowly. Jack and Hootin typically flee, hiss and swat when overwhelmed or scared. It's important to provide them with a small room with appropriate hiding spots for them to relax in, such as their 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 them. The room you set them up in will be the catalyst for how quickly they acclimate. Start thinking now which room in your home would be best for Jack and Hootin to settle into. If it's a bedroom, can they get under the bed or dresser making it difficult to spend time with them? 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 them? 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 their 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 Jack and Hootin while in their hidey spot. Over time, by continuing to do this, Jack and Hootin will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

Here's how to help Jack and Hootin during your first months together:

This step is crucial in helping Jack and Hootin acclimate to their new home. Confine Jack and Hootin to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Jack and Hootin with a litter box, food, water, and a bed. Ensure they cannot get to *inappropriate* hiding spots (under the bed, in a closet, on top of a cabinet, etc.). Provide them with a safe, comfortable hiding place instead like their cat carrier, a hidey-bed, or a large dog crate covered with a blanket.

Spend time with Jack and Hootin in their room. Don't force them out of their hiding spot. Instead, encourage them to come out on their own using happy talk, offering a toy or treats. Once they are using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to interact with you, you can start introducing them to the rest of your home. Start by propping the door open and allowing them to come out on their own. Don't force it! If you come across something that you can tell Jack and Hootin is worried about, allow them to hang back or hide if they choose to do so.

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Jack and Hootin have started exploring the rest of the house, give them a safe space that they can retreat to. When they are in their safe space, insist that guests leave them alone and try to ignore them yourself. That way, when they come out, you can reward their bravery with your attention.

No visitors (at first). Allow Jack and Hootin time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing them to new people. When you have visitors over, give Jack and Hootin the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore them – or if Jack and Hootin seem curious or interested, have the new person toss them treats or offer a favorite toy. We want exciting, good things to come from new people.

Practice crate training. Leave their carrier out all the time, so it's just a part of their normal environment. Add a bed and keep the door securely propped open so they can go in and out on their own, making sure the door won't swing shut and frighten them. You can also clicker train them to run into the carrier on cue. Helping Jack and Hootin get comfortable with their carrier will make it easier when it's time to visit the vet.

Visiting the vet: Unless it's an emergency, give Jack and Hootin time to bond to you before taking them to the vet. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if they already trust you, your presence may help them feel more comfortable.

Patience will come in handy for you. Jack and Hootin need an understanding owner who has the time and desire to allow them to adapt in their own time. Getting to know them and watching them come out of their shell will be extremely rewarding. Celebrate those small victories.

We're here to help!

We want Jack and Hootin to be successful in their 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 Jack and Hootin 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!