



Phil 347930: What to Expect

Phil is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Phil is a sweet and playful boy who is ready to find his forever home. Phil can be nervous and scared in unfamiliar and busy environments but if you have the patience and time to help him acclimate you'll end up with a very sweet boy. His new owner should expect to be patient with him as he acclimates to his new home.

Phil came to OHS after spending his entire life in a foster home that had been working with a local rescue to find him a permanent family. When he arrived at OHS he displayed fearful behavior and would cower, hide and swat at hands when staff approached him. As time went on, his behavior towards people relaxed but the busy, noisy shelter environment would continue to overwhelm Phil and he would revert back to being fearful and nervous again. 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.

Phil adjusted to the BMOD program very quickly. Within just a few days, he showed curiosity and confidence by approaching staff to sniff us, seek attention, and lean into our pets. He especially enjoyed playing with feather wand toys, eagerly chasing and pouncing as we swept the toy through the air. Phil looked forward to staff visits, often headbutting for affection and even climbing into our laps for cuddle time. It became clear that he simply needed a calmer, quieter setting than the main shelter could provide. The BMOD environment allowed him to feel safe and comfortable, which helped build his trust and strengthen his positive interactions with people.

Phil also showed curiosity and interest in the other cats in the BMOD program. Whenever he saw another cat, he would approach the front of his kennel with relaxed, friendly body language. We introduced him to several cats during supervised "playdates," and in every interaction he was gentle, respectful, and sweet. Phil may enjoy having a feline companion in his future home.

Phil will do best in a calm environment with a family that has the patience and time to help him acclimate. He loves taking naps on soft blankets, watching wildlife out the window, chasing feather wand toys and cuddling with his favorite humans. If you are looking for a sweet boy then Phil may be the one for you!

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

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

This step is crucial in helping Phil acclimate to his new home. Confine Phil to one cat-proof room in your house.

Provide Phil 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 Phil 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 Phil is worried about, allow him to hang back or hide if he chooses to do so.

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Phil 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 Phil time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing him to new people. When you have visitors over, give Phil the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore him – or if Phil 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 Phil 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 Phil 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. Phil 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 Phil 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 the BMOD cat trainers at bmodcat@oregonhumane.org to connect with the Feline Behavior Modification department.

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

