



Guava 348086: What to Expect

Guava is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Guava is a sweet, sensitive, and playful kitten who is ready to find her forever home. She may be timid at first, but once she feels safe and secure, her playful and affectionate personality shines through. She loves being petted, enjoying tasty treats, zooming around the room, basking in sunny spots from her cat tower, and playing with her favorite toys. Guava may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets, but with patience and time to build trust, she will form a strong, loving bond with her person.

Guava was surrendered to OHS due to persistent shy and fearful behavior in the home, as well as ongoing conflicts with the resident cat. In her previous home, she was described as shy and easily overwhelmed by the number of people in the household. Her former family felt that she would thrive in a quieter home with fewer people. They also shared that, while she was selective about the people she bonded with, she formed deep and affectionate relationships with those she trusted. Prior to her surrender, Guava exited the room where she was being kept and became involved in an altercation with the resident cat. During the incident, one of the children in the home attempted to separate the animals. In the process, Guava delivered a quick bite to the child's hand and immediately released. The injury was minor and did not require medical attention. Upon returning to OHS, Guava continued to exhibit shy and fearful behavior around people and in response to loud noises. These behaviors included darting away, cowering, and hiding when staff attempted to approach or handle her. Due to the level of stress she was displaying and the impact it had on her ability to comfortably interact with staff, she was enrolled 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 dedicated one-on-one time with our team, we were able to help her decompress and learn more about her personality.

Guava acclimated very quickly to the BMOD program. We saw immediately that being in a quiet, calm environment and having choice and control made her feel safe. She was nervous at first with new people and with hands approaching, but as we sat with her in her larger kennel and offered her verbal encouragement and treats, she soon realized that we were not a threat and her body language began to relax. Guava began to readily eat the treats we offered her in our presence, and she began to show an avid interest in toys. When we waved the wand toy through the air, we watched her expertly stalk it before catapulting spectacularly high and impressing us with her acrobatic skills. By using toys and treats (two things Guava loves) it helped her to understand that only good things happen when people are around. Now, she eagerly sits at the front of her kennel and meows to let us know she is ready for playtime. As her trust in us grew more she became increasingly receptive to touch. When she feels comfortable with people, she enjoys gentle cheek, chin, and neck scratches. However, her new family should understand that building a bond with her will take time, patience, and consistency.

Guava has met several of the kitties in our program. While she is able to coexist and play with them, she does not typically seek them out or follow them around. She occasionally shows signs of uncertainty and may hiss when feeling conflicted. According to her previous home, Guava got along well with her littermate but would hiss at and swat their resident cat. Based on what we've observed, we believe she has the potential to successfully live with another cat if given the time, patience, and proper slow introductions. However, we also feel she would be perfectly happy as the only cat in the home.

Guava still has moments when she startles easily and may run and hide, but she recovers quickly with verbal encouragement. She has shown tremendous progress here and we know that in the right home she will flourish even more. Guava will do best in a calm home, with a family that is patient with her as she acclimates. If you are looking for the sweetest little floofy girl, Guava is the kitty for you!

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

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

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

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

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Guava has started exploring the rest of the house, give her a safe space that she can retreat to. When she is in her safe space, insist that guests leave her alone and try to ignore her yourself. That way, when she comes out, you can reward her bravery with your attention.

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

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

Visiting the vet: Unless it's an emergency, give Guava time to bond to you before taking her to the vet. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if she already trusts you, your presence may help her feel more comfortable.

Patience will come in handy for you. Guava is a cat that needs an understanding owner who has the time and desire to allow her to adapt in her own time. She may never be a social butterfly, and that's okay! Getting to know her and watching her come out of her shell will be extremely rewarding. Celebrate those small victories.

We're here to help!

We want Guava to be successful in her 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 Guava 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!