



Sassy 348904: What to Expect

Sassy is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home. Sassy is an incredibly sweet gal looking for her forever home! Once comfortable, Sassy bonds strongly with her people and wants to be a part of everything they're up to. This can include sniffy walks, cuddling on the couch, or coexisting in the same space calmly. Sassy comes to OH through our Second Chance program, where she found herself overwhelmed by the hustle and bustle of county shelter life. When feeling overwhelmed, Sassy will communicate her discomfort with flashing her teeth, and if these signs of stress are ignored, Sassy will continue to escalate her behavior by snapping at handlers. When her boundaries are respected, Sassy grows more tolerant of handling and is a very affectionate dog! Sassy will do best in a low traffic, quiet home with dog savvy adopters that are able to confidently read dog body language. Sassy will also need a home without young children, as their unpredictability can be intimidating and frightening for a sensitive dog.

As Sassy grows more attached to her handlers, she can start to show protective behaviors towards other people who come too close to her and her favorite people. Sassy will growl and bark at people coming up to her while she's interacting with her people. Pairing new people with a positive reward (like cheese or hot dog) has helped Sassy feel less stress in the moments and view these interactions in a more positive light, but she'll need adopters that are able and willing to continue this positive reinforcement based training with her.

During her time in the shelter, Sassy has been introduced to multiple dogs to gauge her level of interest in social interaction with dogs. Sassy has shown to prefer calmer dogs that are happy to coexist with her, and finds more rowdy and intense playstyles overwhelming. A pet meet is required to ensure all dogs in the home would enjoy living with one another.

Here's how to help Sassy 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 towards 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 Sassy is not comfortable with 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!

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

Supervise your dog outside. Even if you have a fenced yard, please do not let Sassy out alone. They are small and could easily hide under your deck or a bush - or slip through a gap in your fence! They do like to go for short walks

and go outside to potty but need some time to build confidence to go on longer excursions in even the quietest of neighborhoods.

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

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

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

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

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.

Try using **Adaptil (Dog Appeasing Pheromone)** or **Rescue Remedy by Bach Flower Essences**. These products may help dogs settle in new environments by easing the stress associated with change.

We're here to help!

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