



Bernie 352917: What to Expect

Bernie is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home. Bernie is a sweet and shy little dog learning how to be a pet dog in new environments. When comfortable Bernie will curl up into your lap for gentle pets, take treats from your hands, and enjoys slow leisurely walks in quiet low traffic areas. His history is a mystery, but based on his behavior it's likely prior to coming into the shelter he has never learned to walk on leash and explore spaces outside the home. Bernie can be nervous in new environments, moving through thresholds like doorways, and is getting used to the sight and sounds of the big wide world. When nervous he will attempt to flee or hide to avoid what is frightening him. His new family will need to take things slow as he adjusts to his new life as a pet dog. He will do best in a low traffic quiet home away from the hustle and bustle of busy neighborhoods like downtown. We expect that Bernie 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!**

Bernie finds comfort from the presence of other social and confident dogs and would do well in a home with another dog. A pet meet is required before adoption to ensure personality compatibility. Bernie would also enjoy soaking up all the love and affection as the only dog in the home. He would do best in a home without small children who's unpredictable movements and vocalizations can be frightening. When uncomfortable, Bernie will choose to avoid a situation, hide, or freeze. If pressured into a corner or to interact before he's comfortable, he could growl or snap in an attempt to create space. Allowing him the choice to come closer to you when he feels comfortable will help build a strong bond of trust and respect. Treats always help!

Here's how to help Bernie 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 Bernie 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.

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

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

Wait to take walks. Bernie will need time to bond with you before you start taking them for walks. Give them a couple of weeks to get to know you and their new home, then practice walking around your yard before trying a walk around the block. Bernie will do best walking alongside a confident canine companion. They're already doing a great job of checking in with their human at the other end of the leash – continue encouraging this behavior to help strengthen the bond by offering treats.

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

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

Don't take Bernie to busy places where they will have lots of uncontrolled interactions with people/dogs (such as Saturday Market, off-leash dog parks, coffee shops, walks down Hawthorne St., Home Depot, etc.).

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