



Independence 351014: What to Expect

Independence is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Independence is a sweet, sensitive, and silly floofy girl who is ready to find her forever home. Independence may be a little timid at first, but once she feels safe and secure, her charming, playful personality shines through. She loves being near her people, enjoying tasty treats, zooming around the room, sunbathing and birdwatching from her window-side cat tower, and playing with her favorite toys. While Independence may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets, with patience and time to build trust, she will form a deep bond with her special person and become a fun-loving, energetic companion.

Independence came to OHS from the home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver who was no longer able to provide her with the care she needed. When Independence arrived at OHS she displayed fearful, shy behaviors that presented as hissing, darting, and swatting when the staff attempted to engage with 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.

Independence was worried and overwhelmed during her first few days in BMOD. She spent most of her time perched on her cat tower, quietly observing us with wide, cautious eyes. If anyone approached too closely, she would hiss and dart away, telling us that she was frightened and needed space. We respected her boundaries, spoke to her softly, and offered treats to help her build positive associations with people.

It didn't take long for us to discover one of Independence's favorite things—toys! The moment we brought out a wand toy, she transformed into an adorably silly hunter, enthusiastically stalking her target before standing on her hind legs and flopping gracefully onto her "prey". By pairing our presence with two of Independence's favorite things—playtime and treats— she gradually learned that people bring good things, helping her build confidence and trust. Today, she eagerly sits at the front of her kennel, meowing to let us know she is ready for her next play session.

As Independence's confidence grew, so did her trust in people. She began showing us just how much she enjoys having people around, perking up when she sees us and choosing to relax nearby—whether curled up at our feet while we worked on the computer or lounging comfortably beside us. While she loves being in our company, Independence is still cautious about being touched and may move away if someone attempts to pet her before she is ready. Even so, she often chooses to stay close, rolling around, showing off her playful and flirty personality, and engaging with people in ways that indicate she feels safe and enjoys their company. When she is feeling comfortable and secure, she will accept gentle pets along her cheeks, neck, and back, but she is still learning what petting is. Her future family should be prepared to give her the time and patience she needs to continue building trust. They should also be willing to continue

working with her on becoming more comfortable with touch, using gentle, positive interactions and respecting her boundaries as her confidence grows.

Independence showed curiosity when she spotted the other kitties in the program, perking up and watching with interest. However, during several introductions, even though she appeared able to co-exist with them, she often became frustrated and tense around them. At times, she would hiss, swat, and chase after them when she felt overwhelmed. Because of this, we believe Independence would be happiest in a home without other kitties, where she can be the center of attention and soak up all the love and affection for herself.

Independence has blossomed into the playful, sweet, and happy girl we always knew she could be. While she can still be startled by sudden movements or unfamiliar situations and may briefly run to hide, she recovers quickly with gentle reassurance and kind words. She has made tremendous progress during her time in the BMOD program, and we're confident she will continue to flourish in the right home. Independence will do best in a calm, patient home where her family will give her the time she needs to settle in at her own pace. If you are looking for a sweet, playful, and adorably floofy girl, then Independence 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. Independence typically flees and hides 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 Independence 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 Independence while in her hidey spot. Over time, by continuing to do this, Independence will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

This step is crucial in helping Independence acclimate to her new home. Confine Independence to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Independence 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 Independence 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 Independence is worried about, allow her to hang back or hide if she chooses to do so.

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Independence 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 Independence time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing her to new people. When you have visitors over, give Independence the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask

new people to ignore her – or if Independence 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 Independence 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 Independence 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. Independence 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 Independence 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 Independence 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!