



Alex 353582: What to Expect

Alex is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Alex is a sweet and sensitive boy who is ready to find his forever home. Alex may be a little timid at first, but once he feels safe and secure, his charming and loving personality shines through. He loves enjoying tasty treats, napping on soft blankets, cuddling and being pet from nose to tail.

Alex's previous owner sadly passed away, and a kind neighbor welcomed him into their home, providing care and comfort until he arrived at Oregon Humane. While living with the neighbor, Alex was described as a very sweet boy who warmed up to people once he felt comfortable and thoroughly enjoyed the company of the other cats in the home. When Alex came to Oregon Humane, it was clear the busy and noisy shelter environment proved overwhelming for him. He spent much of his time hiding beneath his blanket and cowering, clearly struggling to feel safe and secure. Although he never displayed any aggressive behaviors toward staff, it was evident that he needed a quieter, more supportive environment to help him adjust. Recognizing his needs, we welcomed Alex into our Behavior Modification (BMOD) Program, where the calmer setting and individualized support are better suited to helping fearful cats build confidence and feel more comfortable in the 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 him decompress and learn more about his personality.

Alex was understandably worried and overwhelmed during his first few days in BMOD. He spent much of his time tucked beneath his blanket, only venturing out when he thought no one was around. We started by simply sitting quietly in his kennel, speaking softly and offering gentle words of reassurance. As Alex began peeking his head out from under his blanket, we offered our hand for him to sniff and be comfortable with our presence. When we noticed his body language relaxing with our hand nearby, we gently reached out to pet his cheek. It didn't take long for us to discover that gentle touch was exactly what Alex needed to begin feeling safe and building trust with us. Alex absolutely loves being pet, and the soothing comfort of gentle affection helps him relax and gain confidence. Before long, he leaned into our hands, enthusiastically headbutting us for more pets, and purring up a storm. He also has the most adorable elevator butt! Once Alex knows he's safe, he is more than happy to show off just how much he enjoys affection.

Alex also showed a sweet curiosity about the other cats in our program. He would watch them playing and pouncing on toys outside his kennel, often coming forward with happy little chirps and murmurs whenever he spotted a feline friend. His interest in their company was hard to miss! Seeing how much he enjoyed watching the other cats, we decided to introduce him to a few feline friends, and his confidence blossomed even more. Alex was eager to greet each new cat, happily approaching them before finding a cozy spot to curl up beside them. Their companionship seemed to bring him a wonderful sense of comfort and security. It's clear that Alex is a social boy who truly enjoys having other cats around. Feline friends seem to bring out his brave, affectionate side, and we think having a friendly kitty companion in his future home would be something he would really appreciate.

Alex has blossomed from a worried, timid boy into a sweet and social kitty who has shown us just how much he loves affection, gentle pets, and spending time with his people. He also enjoys crunchy treats, cozy naps on soft blankets, and the companionship of other cats. Alex will thrive in a calm, patient home with a friendly resident cat and a family who understands the importance of allowing him time to settle in at his own pace. With patience, understanding, and gentle encouragement, Alex will continue to build confidence and feel safe enough to let his wonderful personality shine.

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

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

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

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

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Alex 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 Alex time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing him to new people. When you have visitors over, give Alex the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore him – or if Alex seems curious or interested, have the new person toss his 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 his to run into the carrier on cue. Helping Alex 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 Alex 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. Alex 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 Alex 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 Alex 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!