



Otter 354051: What to Expect

Otter is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home. Otter is a delightfully scruffy terrier looking for a couch to call his own! He loves chasing tennis balls, sniffing around on long walks, and burrowing under blankets for a nice nap. Otter comes to OH through our Second Chance program, and much of his history is a mystery prior to his time in the shelter. What we do know is that Otter was overwhelmed with shelter life, the hustle and bustle causing him stress. To cope with this stress, Otter would create space for himself by showing teeth, snapping, and quickly biting at hands to get handlers back away from him. Bringing Otter into the Behavior Modification program has allowed us to provide a quiet and predictable environment to let him decompress from shelter stress, and to go nice and slow with our interactions with Otter. By taking the time to get to know this little guy and all his stress signals, we've been able to have more successful and positive interactions that Otter now looks forward to! Future adopters will need to be ready to continue working with Otter with the same positive reinforcement-based training methods and that are ready to advocate for Otter's space and behavioral needs. Due to his handling sensitivity and history of snapping when his boundaries are pushed, Otter is not a candidate to live in a home with young children, as their fast movements and unpredictability can be overwhelming for Otter.

During his time in BMod, we've introduced Otter to other dogs to gauge his interest in dog social interactions. Otter is a very casual friend, opting to sniff other dogs and carry on with whatever he was doing prior. He'd love to take sniffy walks, casual hikes, or form a book club with other likeminded dogs. A pet meet prior to adoption is required to ensure that all dogs in the home get along and enjoy living with one another.

Here's how to help Otter 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 Otter 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 Otter decide if they want to come closer to you. Don't force interactions. As they grow more comfortable, you will see Otter 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 Otter 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 Otter before introducing them to someone new. They may need to meet a new person multiple times before feeling comfortable with strangers. Treats and allowing Otter to approach as they feel comfortable will be best. New people should just completely ignore Otter at first – playing hard to get is the way to their heart.

Take Otter outside on leash. Even if you have a fenced yard, please do not let Otter out alone. They are so small, that they could easily hide under your deck or a bush - or slip through a gap in your fence! Otter does like to go for walks and go outside to potty but needs some time to figure out the routine before being trusted off leash.

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

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

Use an exercise pen to confine Otter to a small area when you are not home or able to supervise them (see picture). Give them a bed, water, and a potty pad. This "safe spot" will also be a great place to put them when you have visitors to your home, so they don't have to worry about interacting with everyone if they're not comfortable.

We expect that Otter 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!**

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.

We're here to help!

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