



Tuna 356700: What to Expect

Tuna is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Tuna is a sweet and playful girl who is ready to find her forever home. Tuna may be a little timid at first, but once she feels safe and secure, her charming, playful personality shines through. She loves enjoying tasty treats, zooming around the room, curling up in the sunshine on her window-side cat tower, and playing with her favorite toys. While Tuna may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets, with patience and time to build trust, she'll form a deep bond with her special person and become a fun-loving, energetic companion.

Tuna was found as a stray kitten and came to OHS after spending several weeks in a foster home. Her foster parents described Tuna as a sweet, shy, and sensitive girl who enjoyed bird watching, batting at spring toys, and grooming and snuggling with her sibling. When Tuna arrived at OHS she displayed fearful, shy behaviors that presented as hiding, darting, and hissing 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.

Tuna was worried and overwhelmed during her first few days in BMOD. She spent most of her time hiding 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 Tuna's favorite things—toys! The moment we brought out a wand toy, she transformed into an agile hunter, expertly stalking her target before launching herself spectacularly into the air with impressive acrobatic leaps. By pairing our presence with two of Tuna's favorite things—playtime and treats—we helped her learn that people bring good things, gradually building her confidence and trust. Today, she eagerly sits at the front of her kennel, meowing to let us know she's ready for her next play session.

As Tuna became more comfortable with us, she also began accepting gentle touch. Once she feels safe, she now enjoys soft scratches along her cheeks, neck, and back. Her future family should be prepared to give her the time and patience she needs to continue building trust, using gentle, positive interactions and respecting her boundaries as she becomes more comfortable with handling.

Tuna also became increasingly curious about the cats around her. We introduced her to several kitties in the program through playdates, and she quickly discovered how much fun it was to have a feline playmate. She can be cautious when first meeting someone new and may hiss or grumble, but once she has had time to feel comfortable, she loves running

around and playing with her new friends. Tuna enjoyed feline companionship so much that we moved her into the Sunroom, a communal cat room where she can live alongside other cats 24/7.

Tuna has blossomed into the playful, sweet, and happy little 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.

Tuna truly thrives in the company of other cats. Having a feline friend helps her feel safe, secure, and confident, and she can often be found playing with or peacefully relaxing alongside her companions. Because of this, Tuna 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, along with a friendly resident cat to be her friend.

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

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

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

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