



## Ivy 291351: What to Expect

**Ivy is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home.** Ivy is a sensitive, sweet, independent girl who is ready to find her forever home. Ivy needs an understanding owner that is experienced with feline body language and has the time and desire to allow her to acclimate in her own time. Ivy may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets, but she will bond with someone when given the time she needs to get to know you.

Ivy was surrendered by her previous family because they were unable to properly care for her. Her previous family stated that Ivy was an affectionate, playful girl with excellent litterbox habits. Upon arriving at OHS she displayed fearful, defensive behaviors to the staff and regularly hid, swatted, and lunged when anyone attempted to handle her. It was decided to move her to the Behavior Modification Program. This program would allow us to work with her on her fearful behavior and handling sensitivities.

When she first arrived in the Behavior Modification program Ivy would continuously hide and cower in her kennel. Any attempt at handling her by the team resulted in her hissing, swatting, and scratching. For the first week or so, we spent time sitting in her kennel speaking softly and calmly to her to show we were not a threat. As time went on, she started meowing at us, coming forward and leaning in for cheek/chin scratches. She now loves to engage with people and is always ready for love when we visit her in her kennel. Ivy continues to be nervous with loud noises or chaotic environments. It is in these moments she will retreat to a safe place but recovers quickly with verbal encouragement. Ivy loves to play with wand toys and as we soar them through the air she will watch with great delight and pounce on them. Ivy has met other cats here at the shelter and seems curious about them. She may do ok with a kitty friend in her new home. One that is happy to co-exist and relax and not one that wants to rough and tumble play with her.

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. Ivy typically hisses, swats and lunges, and may bite 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. Ivy likes looking out windows from her scratching post so having one in her new home will be beneficial for 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 Ivy 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 threat. Place a small amount of wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Ivy while in her hidey spot. Bring the laser pointer or wand toy out and allow her to observe and engage with it. Over time, by continuing to do this, Ivy will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

### **Here's how to help Ivy during your first months together:**

#### **This step is crucial in helping Ivy acclimate to her new home. Confine Ivy to one cat-proof room in your house.**

Provide Ivy 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.). Provide her with a safe, comfortable hiding place instead like her cat carrier, a hidey-bed, or a large dog crate covered with a blanket.

**Spend time with Ivy 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 Ivy is worried about, allow her to hang back or hide if she chooses to do so.

**Continue to provide a safe space.** Even when Ivy 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 Ivy time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing her to new people. When you have visitors over, give Ivy the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore her – or if Ivy 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 Ivy 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 Ivy 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. Ivy 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 Ivy 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 Erika at [erikas@oregonhumane.org](mailto:erikas@oregonhumane.org) to connect with the Feline Services Manager.

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you and Ivy 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!