



Hannah 301632: What to Expect

Hannah is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Hannah is a shy, sweet girl who is ready to find her forever home. Hannah 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. Hannah may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets, but she will bond with her new family when given the time she needs to acclimate.

Hannah was a transfer from another shelter, so we don't have much history on her. When she first arrived, she displayed fearful behavior in her kennel, hiding under her blanket and cowering. Hannah never showed aggressive behavior towards people, but it was clear that the busy, chaotic shelter environment was overwhelming for her. After several weeks with no change in her behavior, it was decided to place her in the Behavior Modification Program. The environment in the BMOD program is more conducive to helping cats feel comfortable in a shelter environment. With the larger kennel space, access to windows, and more one on one time with the team we set out to learn more about her and help her overcome her fears.

We found early on that Hannah responds well to verbal encouragement. Sitting near her, speaking softly, and offering slow eye blinks gave Hannah the confidence needed to trust us. She also loves treats, especially Chorus, and we used treats to build a positive association between people and food. Overtime, we encouraged her to come out of hiding using calm voices and tasty treats. Hannah now regularly perches on her cat tower and solicits attention, leaning into cheek and chin scratches and allowing full body pets. Hannah has also met several other kitties in the BMOD program and seems to enjoy their company. She also loves wand toys, and will track them through the air, then chase and pounce on them with great delight. What Hannah needed was time to build trust and confidence with people and we are looking for a family that can help her transition into a new home with the same love and patience.

Hannah continues to be worried when loud and/or sudden movements occur. In these moments she will run and hide but easily recovers with gentle calming voices. Once a bond and relationship are formed with people, she will lean in for pets and headbutt to show her affection. Her favorite activities are playing with toys, eating treats, and relaxing in the best sunspots. Hannah may enjoy having a feline friend in her new home.

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. Hannah typically flees and hides when overwhelmed or scared. If cornered, she may hiss, cower, and swat so it's important to not overwhelm her as she adjusts to her new home. 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. **She should not be given access to the whole home setting until she has acclimated to one room. 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 Hannah 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 a wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Hannah while in her hidey spot. Or toss her a few crunchy treats. Bring the laser pointer or wand toy out and allow her to observe and engage with it. Over time, by continuing to do this, Hannah will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

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

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

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