



Winona 300835: What to Expect

Winona is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Winona is a social, sweet, girl who likes attention on her own terms. She enjoys being with people, will solicit attention, rubbing on legs, but can easily become overstimulated when handled for too long. She has a history of being nervous with new people/places and will need time to acclimate to her new home. Winona will do best in an adult only home as the only pet.

Winona was surrendered by her previous family to the Humane Society of Central Oregon in Bend due to their home being too busy for Winona. She was originally adopted from OHS as a kitten and we agreed to take her back under our care. Winona did not care for the kids or other animals in her previous home and would sometimes display anxious behavior. This anxious behavior sometimes caused her to defecate outside of the litterbox. When the activity in the home increased with people and other pets, she would occasionally do this, but she never urinated outside of the litterbox. While at the shelter in Bend and here at OHS, she has always used the litterbox and has not had any issues in this area. When Winona arrived at OHS, she was placed in the Behavior Modification program where we could help her settle into the shelter environment. The Behavior Modification program is designed to help cats adjust to shelter life that may otherwise display fearful/worried/anxious behavior in a home setting. She acclimated well to the shelter, and we were able to learn a lot about her during this time. Winona is social with everyone she meets, rubbing on legs, leaning in for attention but can quickly become overstimulated if pet for too long. She did bite someone when her body language was misinterpreted. Preceding the bite, Winona was soliciting attention and jumped in their lap. She enjoyed cheek/chin scratches for a while but when their hand started petting her on her back is when Winona turned and bit their hand. It was a quick bite and release, and no medical attention was needed. Winona recovered quickly from this incident, and it did not further escalate.

She is an independent lap cat who is not overly active and can take time to warm up to strangers. She will do best with someone who is experienced in feline body language. Her favorite activities are lounging, napping, and occasionally playing with toys. Winona does not like other animals and will need to be the only pet in her new home. She also prefers to have an uncovered litterbox that is placed in a low traffic part of the home.

Here's how to help Winona during your first month together:

This step is crucial in helping Winona acclimate to her new home. Confine Winona to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Winona 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. Once she is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to play with toys, you can start introducing her to the rest of your home.

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

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

Patience will come in handy for you. Winona 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 with everyone she meets but she will bond with her new family. 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 Winona 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 Winona 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!