



Tommy 303261: What to Expect

Tommy is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Tommy is a sweet, shy boy who enjoys curling up next to the ones he loves, but it will take some time for him to get to know you first. His new family should give him plenty of time to acclimate to his new environment. Once a bond is formed, you will have an affectionate, sweet, and loving boy as a part of the family.

Tommy was surrendered to the OHS Salem campus due to his owner passing away. We know that in his previous home he was indoors only and lived well with other cats. He spent his whole life with this family, so you can imagine how all the changes he has gone through have been worrisome for him. During his time at the Salem campus, he displayed fearful, shy behavior and would run, cower, and hide when staff attempted to interact with him. He was quickly adopted into a home where he spent several weeks hiding day and night and would only come out to eat and use the litterbox. The adopter made the decision to bring Tommy back so that we could work to understand Tommy and help him overcome his fears. When he was returned, he was placed in the Behavior Modification program at the Portland campus. The environment in the BMOD program is more conducive to helping cats feel comfortable in a shelter environment and we set out to learn more about him and help him thrive.

Tommy acclimated very quickly to the BMOD program. We found early on that Tommy responded well to verbal encouragement. Sitting near him, speaking softly, and offering slow eye blinks gave Tommy the confidence needed to trust us. Within 48 hours of arriving in BMOD, he was meowing at us for attention and leaning in for cheek and chin scratches. He now regularly comes up to the staff, meowing and headbutting for attention. He loves looking out the window at birds, occasionally playing with wand toys and exploring the larger space outside of his kennel. He is sweet and chatty with everyone he has met here, and we are confident that he will make a wonderful companion for a new family. We can only assume that the trauma he felt from losing his family, ending up at a shelter and then being adopted into a new home was too much for him to handle so quickly and that is why he was so fearful.

He is not an overly active cat and is happy to just relax and gaze out windows watching wildlife and taking naps in the best sunspots. Tommy will do well in a calm, quiet home with someone that is open to having conversations with him as he loves being talked to.

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

Confine Tommy to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Tommy with a litter box, food, water, and a bed. Ensure he cannot get to *inappropriate* hiding spots (under the bed, in a closet, on top of a cabinet, etc.). Provide him with a safe, comfortable hiding place instead like his cat carrier, a hidey-bed, or a large dog crate covered with a blanket. Once he is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to play with toys, you can start introducing him to the rest of your home.

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Tommy has started exploring the rest of the house, give him a safe space that he can retreat to. When he is in his safe space, insist that guests leave him alone and try to ignore him yourself. That way, when he comes out, you can reward his bravery with your attention.

No visitors (at first). Allow Tommy time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing him to new people. When you have visitors over, give Tommy the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore him – or if Tommy seems curious or interested, have the new person toss him treats or offer a favorite toy. We want exciting, good things to come from new people.

Practice crate training. Leave his carrier out all the time, so it's just a part of his normal environment. Add a bed and keep the door securely propped open so he can go in and out on his own, making sure the door won't swing shut and frighten him. You can also clicker train him to run into the carrier on cue. Helping Tommy get comfortable with his carrier will make it easier when it's time to visit the vet.

Visiting the vet: Unless it's an emergency, give Tommy time to bond to you before taking him to the vet. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if he already trusts you, your presence may help him feel more comfortable.

We're here to help!

We want Tommy to be successful in his 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 Behavior Modification Manager.

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

