



Willie 309824: What to Expect

Willie is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Willie is an active and sweet boy who is ready to find his forever home. Willie loves being around people, climbing into laps, playing with toys, and eating treats.

Willie was transferred to OHS from a shelter in Washington after they reached out to OHS asking for assistance. Willie was found living in an evicted home with several other cats, and when he was found he was very ill. The shelter nursed him back to health but ultimately had to remove his eye due to an ongoing infection that could not be resolved. While at this shelter he was pro-social with people, leaning in for check and chin scratches and allowed all handling. The only concern they had was Willie would have intermittent litterbox misuse while in his kennel, occasionally urinating and defecating outside of the litter box. This shelter did not have the capacity or resources to work with Willie on this, so they reached out to OHS for assistance. OHS agreed to take him in where he was placed in the Behavior Modification Program. With the larger kennel space in BMOD, access to windows, and more one on one time with the team we set out to see if we could resolve his litterbox misuse.

Willie acclimated very quickly to the BMOD program. From day one he was eager to meet everyone with a headbutt and a loud purr. He loves lounging on his cat tower, playing with toys, accepting chin and cheek pets and sitting in laps. The OHS medical team reviewed his medical history and could not find a medical reason for the litterbox misuse and suspect it was behavioral. Willie has been in our care for several weeks now and has not had any litterbox concerns while in our care. He's been using the litterbox with no problems. We are unsure why he had intermittent litterbox misuse at the previous shelter but suspect he was frustrated with his current situation, and this was his way of telling people. It's possible the bigger kennel in BMOD, increased enrichment and more opportunities to do normal cat things is just what he needed to help him feel more comfortable.

Willie has met several other kitties here and he's not big fan of them. He will stalk and pick fights with the other cats, so he will need to be the only cat in his new home. Willie will do best in a calm, quiet home, one that can provide him consistency and routine and with all the snuggles and cuddles he likes to have.

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

This step is crucial in helping Willie acclimate to his new home. Confine Willie to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Willie 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.

Spend time with Willie in his room. Don't force him out of his hiding spot. Instead, encourage him to come out on his own using happy talk, offering a Touch Tool, treats or toys. Once he is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to interact with you, you can start introducing him to the rest of your home. Start by propping the door open and allowing him to come out on his own. Don't force it! If you come across something that you can tell Willie is worried about, allow him to hang back or hide if he chooses to do so.

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

Patience will come in handy for you. Willie is a cat that needs an understanding owner who has the time and desire to allow him to adapt in his own time. He may never be a social butterfly, and that's okay! Getting to know him and watching him come out of his shell will be extremely rewarding. Celebrate those small victories.

We're here to help!

We want Willie 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 Willie 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!