



Smalls 310764: What to Expect

Smalls is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Smalls is a sweet, playful girl who is ready to find her forever home. She will take some time to acclimate to a new home but once she does, you'll end up with a very sweet, affectionate and snuggly girl.

Smalls was transferred to OHS from another shelter at the age of 4 weeks. She was immediately placed in a foster home until she was old enough to go up for adoption. While in the foster home she was described as a little cat with a big attitude! In the foster home she grew into a fearless, energetic ball of fur who's always ready for action. Her playtime style is all about stealth—hiding, stalking, and then pouncing with the enthusiasm of a kitten three times her size. But when it's time to wind down, Smalls reveals her softer side. As she drifts off into dreamland, a gentle pet will set off a purring symphony that sounds like she's trying to purr her way into your heart.

When she was finally old enough to go up for adoption she came back to the shelter and boy did she have a lot of feelings about it. She was unhappy having to leave her foster home only to be back in a kennel. She told us so by growling, hissing and trembling with fear. Due to the fear she was exhibiting, 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 increased one on one time with the team we set out to help her acclimate to the shelter environment.

It only took her 72 hours to feel comfortable with her new space. She was bit weary at first, hiding, hissing and grumbling but once we brought out the toys, she couldn't resist. She loves playing with all kinds of toys! She is now friends with many of the staff here, climbing into laps, purring and cuddling in our arms. She has met several other kitties here and will typically hiss at first, but overtime has learned to enjoy their company. Smalls just needed some help acclimating to the shelter world and once she knew we were her friends she became the total lovebug that we know she is. Smalls may be small, but she's got a big spirit, and she's ready to fill your home with love, laughter, and endless entertainment.

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. Smalls typically flees, hides, and cowers 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. 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 Smalls 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 wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Smalls while in her hidey spot. Or toss her a few crunchy treats. Over time, by continuing to do this, Smalls will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

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

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

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