

♥ Hamster Care ♥



We're so excited that you are interested in adopting a hamster from us!

This document will walk you through what you will need to know to prepare for and care for your new hamster.

Here is what you are committing to by adopting a hamster:

- *A companion with an average lifespan of 1.5-2.5 years, sometimes more.*
- *A prey animal who has the potential to bite or escape if mishandled or made to be afraid.*
- *A very curious creature who needs a lot of space and enrichment to thrive.*
- *A pet deserving the absolute best, not to be thrown away when one becomes bored.*
- *A SOLITARY pet. Do not house with other hamsters, because they often fight to the death.*



Here is what we will cover in this document:

- [Appropriate cages](#)
- [The supplies you will need](#)
- [How to set up your cage](#)
- [What and how often to feed your hamster](#)
- [What to do when you first bring them home, and how to bond](#)
- [Warning signs that something is wrong with your hamster](#)

💜 **Appropriate Cages** 💜

Just because hamsters are small, this does not mean they should live in small spaces. A hamster is an incredibly active and curious animal, they need space to roam, burrow, run & play. Because of this, they need more floor space, not more levels to climb.

The minimum size we require for Syrian hamsters is 600 square inches, and for dwarves, 450 square inches. Again, this is the minimum. The bigger the better. To calculate the size of a cage, simply multiply the length of the cage by the width. The cage should allow enough height for a 12" wheel in the case of a Syrian, or a 6-8" wheel for a dwarf.

Common examples of cages that meet/exceed the 600 sq in minimum for Syrians:

- A 40 gallon breeder aquarium tank
- A Prevue 528 cage
- A DIY bin cage made from a Sterilite 50 gallon/200 quart storage bin (with ventilation on the top rather than the sides, because Syrian hamsters can chew their way out)
- An Ikea Detolf, laid flat on its back, with a DIY lid



Common examples of cages that meet/exceed the 450 sq in minimum for Dwarfs:

- A DIY bin cage made from a Sterilite 110 qt storage bin
- Any of the above cages; the bigger the better. Dwarfs are just as active, if not more!

Please see the California Hamster association's website for more ideas:

<https://californiahamsterassociation.com/cage-page>

💜 The Supplies You Will Need 💜

Here is a checklist of bare essentials you will need to prepare for your new companion.

- A cage (of course).
- A small carrier for travel, emergency evacuation use and vet visits.
- A water bottle or a very small bowl for water (for example, a glass tealight holder). A bottle can be secured to your cage with industrial strength Velcro.
- A food bowl.
- Food: Seed mix and high protein blocks ([see the feeding page](#)).
- An upright running wheel (10-12" for a Syrian and 6-8" for a Dwarf). The bigger the better. Small wheels lead to back pain and improper spinal curvature, possibly injury.

Syrian wheel examples: Niteangel Super-Silent Wheel in size large, 11" Wodent Wheel, 12" Exotic Nutrition Silent Runner, Kaytee Silent Spinner in giant size, and the Carolina Storm wheel.



Dwarf wheel examples: Niteangel Super-Silent or Cloud wheel in size small, 9" Exotic Nutrition Silent Runner, Zacro 8.7" wheel, Kaytee Silent Spinner in regular or large.



- Bedding: unscented paper bedding and aspen only. No other wood shavings, they are dangerous to hamsters' respiratory systems! Popular brands include: Kaytee, All Living Things, Carefresh, Uber and Oxbow.



- A variety of wooden or cardboard chew toys.
- Some sort of ceramic hide out or large mug, so that they can cool off in hot weather.
- Another hide out of any sort, typically wooden. You can even use cardboard boxes and tissue boxes!
- A container for sand: something 2-4" deep and 8"+ wide. Hamsters may use sand for ridding themselves of excess skin oils, or use it to pee in like a litter box.
- Sand: children's play sand from the hardware store, or calcium-free aquarium sand such as CaribSea Super Naturals aquarium sand, and Reptisand.

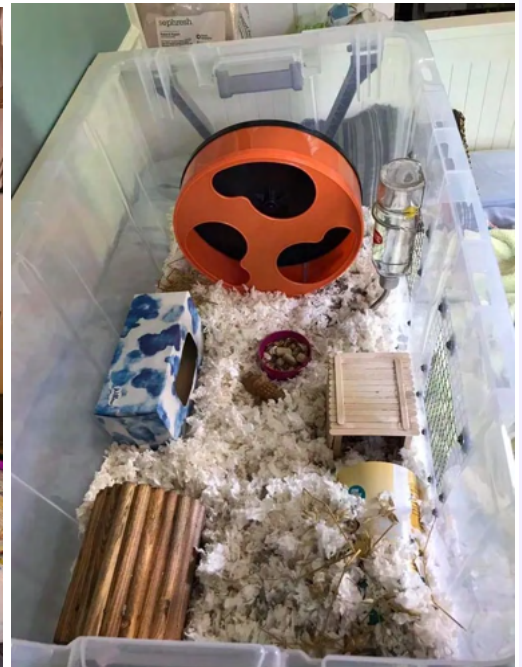


- Some other enrichment options: bendy bridges, platforms, driftwood or grapevine and cork rounds from the reptile section of pet stores, Eco Earth substrate, orchard grass hay, foraging herbs and sprays (millet, oat, flax etc).



💜 How to Set Up Your Cage 💜

There is no “right” way to set up a cage; you’ll have to get to know your unique hamster’s preference over time. The only must is providing 6”+ of bedding in the corner in which they like to burrow and sleep. Some hamsters may decide they prefer using a hideout to burrowing, but you should still provide burrowing space so that they have the option to exercise their natural instincts to burrow. Experiment with different layouts to see what works for you. Again, please see the CA Hamster Association website for great ideas! <https://californiahamsterassociation.com/cage-page>



💜 What and How to Feed Your Hamster 💜

The seed mix we use and recommend is Higgins Sunburst. It is available at most pet stores and online. Higgins Vita Garden is also an option. In a pinch when these are not available, do your best to choose a seed mix that contains a variety of seeds, with a nutrition profile as close as you can get to Higgins Sunburst. Seed mix needs to be supplemented with a high protein lab block. Options for those include: Mazuri Rat and Mouse Diet, All Living Things Power of 5 Hamster and Gerbil diet, and Harlan Teklad. DO NOT feed them Oxbow pellets or any other food which is hay-based. They cannot digest it and it can lead to major digestive/bowel issues.



Exact feeding routines will depend on your hamster. Make sure that they always have access to their protein lab blocks. You can provide a separate bowl for those if you want, and fill whenever it diminishes, or continually add more back every day or two as they disappear from the food bowl with your seed mix. Provide a couple tablespoons of seed mix, 2-3 times a week. Again, this will depend on your hamster.

Hamsters will hoard their food wherever they burrow and sleep. Don't be alarmed if the food bowl is completely empty the next day. They are not eating it all at once. How much they hoard will also determine how often you need to fill your hamster's food bowls, and vice versa. Food will go to waste if you overfeed, as they will just keep hoarding more and more. Provide your hamsters with a little bit of fresh vegetables everyday as well, and occasionally fruit. Too much fiber can disrupt their tummies, so a safe practice is providing a few pieces cut to around the size of their ear.

Your hamsters are allowed treats every day! (As long as they are not overweight). Figure out their favorite nuts and seeds such as: sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, walnuts, peanuts. Nuts are a healthy treat, as well as fruit (fresh or dried). Try to avoid feeding them the processed, sugary treats from pet stores (like Yogies, cookies, and seeds held together by sugar) on a daily basis, as it is bad for their health. On occasion it's okay. You can try baby snack alternatives instead: Gerber puffs and yogurt melts. You can even find some recipes online! Some hamsters also enjoy dried mealworms from the reptile section.

💜 What To Do When You First Bring Them Home & How to Bond 💜

When you first bring home your hamster, chances are they will be very nervous. New sights, smells, and cage. They might be skittish, hide, or bite. You need to give them 24-48 hours to settle down before you begin to

interact. Let your hamster's mood be your guide on how fast or slow to proceed. If you overwhelm them too much at first, they will not create a happy association with you. Some hamsters will be friendly, confident and playful off the bat, but most won't. Be patient. One of the first things you can do is give them torn up tissues/toilet paper that has your scent on it. Rub it between your hands or for women, put the tissue inside your bra for a while. Scatter the tissue in your hamster's cage so that they get used to your smell. They might use this tissue for nesting.

Begin taming/bonding by offering treats. Hold a treat between your fingers and present it to your hamster. If they take it right away, great! If they are hesitant or run away, simply leave the treat, and they will come back to get it once they feel the coast is clear. Keep doing this daily until your hamster takes the treat from you right away. Once they seem to trust you and know that you are the "treat bearer," you can try presenting the treats to them on the palm of your hand. They will either take it off the palm of your hand and eat elsewhere, or if they are very trusting, walk onto your hand to eat it right then and there!

If your hamster is gaining confidence but not eating on your hand, you can try leading them onto the open palm of one hand, using the other hand to hold a treat and guiding them onto the open palm hand. They will usually follow the treat. Find the treat they like the most to get this to work! Over time you might find that they will walk right onto your hand even without treats. This is the goal we are after. This means they trust you. For some hamsters this will take a lot of time, so be patient and keep trying. Don't force them to interact if they don't want to. This is part of the trust process.

Another recommended way of bonding with your hamster is letting them roam in an empty bathtub or playpen, with you in it. Lay some soft towels down on the bottom of the tub or playpen, lay out some toys, gather up your hamster and sit yourself down inside with them. Let them explore and climb over you. Give them treats so that they associate this experience with positivity.

Here's something else you can try: bring a tube or big cup with you, and present it to your hamster. They will most likely be curious and walk inside. Place your open palm at the opening of the cup/tube, so that when they exit, they will have to walk over your hand. They might be hesitant and want to jump past your hand at first, so make sure not to hold the cup or tube high off of the ground. You can find more taming methods on Youtube!



Warning Signs That Something is Wrong with Your Hamster



If you are adopting a young hamster from us, the main thing you'll have to look out for is something called Wet Tail. It is a bacterial infection causing diarrhea. The stress of moving to a new place is thought to make young hamsters more susceptible to contracting it. If you notice that their butt

and tail is wet from diarrhea, take them to the vet ASAP! The drops you can buy at pet stores will not save them. Wet Tail is a fatal disease. It is not common, but you should be on the lookout.

Elderly hamsters might also be susceptible to Wet Tail. In elderly hamsters you will also have to look out for signs of declining health/end of life such as hair loss, motility issues, loss of appetite and weight and energy. More serious issues to look out for at all ages are: cysts (especially on male testes), blood around a female's privates, changes in bowels, limping, rapid or difficult breathing, walking around in circles, etc. There's not much you can do if they are old and reaching the end of their life, but you should contact a vet right away if you observe these things.

Also, hamsters do not hibernate. If your hamster is sleeping and unresponsive, they are not hibernating, but entering torpor. This can be fatal and is usually induced by too low temperatures. Wrap your hamster up in a blanket immediately and observe them until they wake up again. If you are too late, they may pass. Please research this so that you are prepared. You need to keep the room as best you can between 65-75 degrees Fahrenheit to avoid torpor or overheating.

Always, always contact a vet if you observe anything unusual or you are unsure of. Better safe than sorry. Hamsters' lives may be short, but they are not any less deserving of love and care.

Lastly, if you find yourself in a position in which you can no longer care for your hamster, please bring them back to us so that we can ensure that they go to a great new home. Please reach out to us if you have any further questions!

Conclusion

Thank you so much for taking the time to read our document. We look forward to helping you find your perfect little hamster companion. 