



# DOS AND DON'TS OF HAMSTER CARE

## DOS

**DIET DOS:** Feed your hamster a balanced diet, this should include grains, seeds, nuts, animal proteins, fruits, vegetables, and more! See "diet" section for more information.



**ENCLOSURE DOS:** Give your hamster a large sized enclosure including, a properly sized hamster wheel (10-12 inches), a water bottle or water dish, a food bowl, LOTS of enrichment (bendable bridges, chew toys, foraging treats, hideouts, etc.), at least 8-inch-deep bedding in an area for burrowing (10 inches recommended), and a sand bath with hamster-safe, clean, sand. See "enclosure" section for more information.



**WAKING YOUR HAMSTER UP DOS:** Wait until your hamster wakes up (usually around 8:00-10:00 at night) to play and interact with them.



## DON'TS

**DIET DON'TS:** Only feed your hamster sunflowers seeds and corn. These are very fatty foods and can lead to obesity.



**ENCLOSURE DON'TS:** Give your hamster a small enclosure, this can lead to shorter lives, bar-biting, pacing, lethargy, and boredom.



**WAKING YOUR HAMSTER UP DON'TS:** Wake your hamster up during the day. Hamsters are nocturnal/crepuscular and don't enjoy being woken up. This can lead to grumpy hamsters that are more likely to bite.





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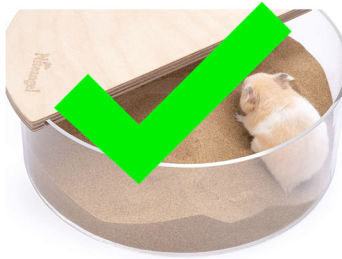
**PLAYTIME DOS:** Use a playpen to give your hamster a change of scenery. Some options are store bought playpens, hamster-proofed rooms, bathtubs with drains closed, and homemade playpens. See “bonding tip #9” for more details.



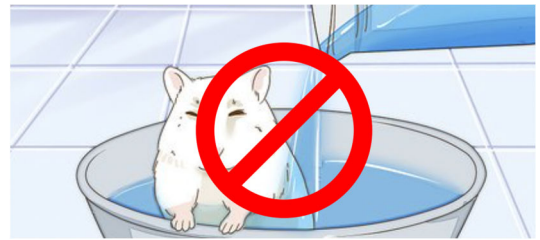
**PLAYTIME DON'TS:** Bring your hamster outside. A lost hamster outside is basically a death sentence to a hamster. Bugs and pesticides can be very harmful to a hamster. Animals like eagles and hawks are natural predators for hamsters.



**BATHING YOUR HAMSTER DOS:** Give your hamster a sand bath so they can remove any excess oils from their coat, remove smells from their coat, and sometimes dig in the sand for extra enrichment. See the “sand bath” section for more information.



**BATHING YOUR HAMSTER DON'TS:** Bathe your hamster in water. This can be very stressful to your hamster, dangerous for your hamster, bad for their coats (because of the removal of natural oils), and overall, a very traumatizing experience for them.



**CLEANING ENCLOSURE DOS:** Spot clean your hamster's enclosure often. This includes removing soiled bedding and large gatherings of poops. It is a good idea to replace about ½ of their enclosure's bedding with fresh bedding once a month. See “cleaning” section for more information.



**CLEANING ENCLOSURE DON'TS:** Remove all of the bedding from your hamster's enclosure when cleaning. This is very stressful to the hamster as they mark their territory with their scent. When all the bedding is removed, it also removes the hamster's scent and studies show that hamsters can take almost an hour to calm down from it.







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**BONDING DOS:** Interact/bond with your hamster separately from your other pets. This includes holding them, letting them out of their enclosure to run around in a safe environment, getting any bedding out of their fur, and checking on their health and wellbeing. See "bonding" section for more information.



**BONDING DON'TS:** Let your hamster interact with your other pets. A scratch or bite from another animal will most likely kill or severely injure a hamster because of their size. There is no way to clearly communicate with another animal so it's best to keep hamsters separate from other pets.



**BEDDING DOS:** Use paper bedding, toilet paper, or other rippable and digestible materials in a hamster enclosure. Some hamster-safe substrates include paper-based bedding (non-scented), aspen shavings, and hemp shavings. Hamster-safe sand, Kaytee soft granules, Ecoearth, cork granules, beach chips, pillow moss, and orchard grass hay can also be used in small quantities in hamster enclosures. See "bedding" section for more information.



**BEDDING DON'TS:** Use cotton nesting material. The long fibers can get wrapped around hamster limbs and teeth. In fact, hamsters will even chew off their own limbs to free themselves from the cotton if they lose circulation. Cotton is not digestible and can cause blockages which can lead to the death of your hamster. Softwood shavings (mainly cedar and pine), saw dust, scented beddings, and corncob beddings are also unsafe substrate/bedding options.



**MULTIPLE HAMSTER DOS:** Keep your hamsters in separate enclosures if you want to own multiple hamsters.



**MULTIPLE HAMSTER DON'TS:** Keep your hamsters in the same enclosure. Syrian hamsters are solitary animals and become very territorial and aggressive when placed in the same enclosure. Even dwarf hamsters are not recommended to house together, as they can become territorial as well.





## DOS AND DON'TS OF HAMSTER CARE

**HOLDING HAMSTER DOS:** Hold your hamster low to the ground or close to your chest. Things like glass measuring cups can be very helpful to hold your hamster when you are moving from one place to another.



**HOLDING HAMSTER DON'TS** Hold your hamster high above the ground. Hamsters are very jumpy and can be very unpredictable. They also have very little depth perception, and they don't know how high they are. This means they could literally jump to their death without knowing it.

