



It is important that hamster owners do as much as possible to give their hamsters plenty of enrichment. While many people talk about the importance of large hamster enclosures, it is just as important to put lots of enrichment in your hamster's enclosure. A hamster will be much happier in a semi-crowded enclosure with lots of enrichment than an enclosure with just the bare necessities.



The easiest way to provide your hamster with enrichment is food and feeding. You can do this with foraging and enrichment foods. In the wild, a hamster would have to forage and gather for all their food. One thing you can do is get rid of your hamster's food dish and sprinkle their food all around the enclosure. You don't need to worry about them finding it because hamsters have an extremely good sense of smell. Another thing you can do is make fruits or vegetables more difficult to get by stringing them up and hanging them from the top of the enclosure. You can also give your hamster hamster-safe herbs, leaves, and flowers to provide them with fiber as well as some new smells. This can stimulate their sense of smell and be very good for your hamster. Dried plants and seeds, known in the hamster community as "sprays", are another way for your hamster to forage. Sprays make your hamster pick the seeds off of the plant like they would do in the wild. There are many different types of sprays such as black sorghum, white sorghum, wheat, flax, panicle millet, oat, mohair millet, yellow millet, pagima green, quinoa, amaranth, and many more. Unfortunately, most sprays are not very common in North America, so you are probably going to have to have them shipped from another country if you want to include them in your hamster's diet/enrichment. Here are some helpful links from Victoria Raechel on where to buy hamster herbs and sprays:

Hamster Herbs:

- <https://www.starwest-botanicals.com/>
- <https://www.etsy.com/ca/search?q=hamster+herbs>
- <https://www.tinyflowersshop.com/>
- <https://www.priderockblooms.co.uk/>
- <https://www.happyhamsterhouse.co.uk/>



Hamster Sprays:

- <https://www.redwoodgroveshop.com/treats>
- https://www.etsy.com/ca/shop/HammypalsStore?ref=simple-shop-header-name&listing_id=953610069
- https://www.etsy.com/ca/shop/Tinypawsandcompany?ref=simple-shop-header-name&listing_id=963384171
- <https://fatpouches.com/>
- https://www.etsy.com/ca/shop/WonderhamsterShop?ref=simple-shop-header-name&listing_id=954643100
- <https://www.petsmart.ca/bird/food-and-treats/treats/all-living-things-oat-sprays-bird-treat-4151.html?cgid=400111>





<https://www.futterkraemerei.com/>

Herbs and leaves are not necessarily unhealthy for a hamster so you can't really give them too many. On the other hand, you have to be more careful with sprays depending on the type of spray. You have to research how healthy or unhealthy a spray is and decide how often and how many sprays you will want to give your hamster. For example, flax sprays are one of the most popular hamster sprays; however, each flax spray pod on a flax spray contains 7 flax seeds. This can easily become too much for a hamster.

Another important enrichment for a hamster is burrowing. Providing a hamster with lots of deep substrate is very important because it is not possible to burrow in very small amounts of substrate. In fact, most hamsters will not even attempt to burrow in less than 10 inches of bedding. Kaytee Clean & Cozy is generally very good at holding burrowing tunnels. It is also important to pack down the bedding when putting it into your enclosure. Also, if you are using a bedding that doesn't hold tunnels and burrows very well, you can layer the bedding with thin layers of hay to make it more stable. See the "bedding" section for more details. You will also want to make a large area that is deep because most hamsters like to make very complex burrows all over their enclosure.

You can also provide your hamster with different substrates to dig in. See the "bedding" section on what substrates are good in small amounts to place in dig boxes. It is important to note that a dig box is not the same as a sand bath. Sand baths are musts for all healthy and happy hamsters while dig boxes are an optional but recommended enrichment. See the "sand bath" section for more details.



Another great enrichment for hamsters is tubes and logs. These allow for a great natural texture for hamsters. Hamsters are naturally very much prey animals in the wild so an open and non-crowded enclosure can make them feel very vulnerable. Tubes and logs allow for more things for your hamster to hide under and explore. Cork logs and grapevine wood are really great because they are very natural and won't hurt your hamster if your hamster chews on them. You can usually find these in the reptile section of pet stores and on reptile websites. Other options for tubes and logs are bamboo roots, birch logs/tubes, and terracotta tubes. Here are some helpful links from Victoria Raechel on where to buy hamster tubes and branches:

<https://www.reptilesrus.ca/decorations-and-furnishings/>

<https://www.northerngecko.net/decorations-and-furnishings/branches-cork-wood/>

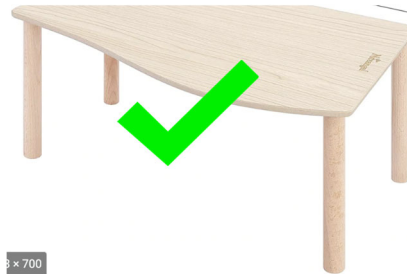
<https://www.petco.com/shop/en/petcostore/category/reptile/decor-hideaways>





HAMSTER CARE: ENRICHMENT

Platforms are great for hamster enclosures. They provide a way for hamsters to burrow underneath as well as a place to put things on top that might be too heavy to place on bedding such as ceramic hideouts or sand baths. It is important to note that platforms shouldn't be taller than 3" from the bedding for dwarf hamsters and 6" from the bedding for Syrian hamsters because hamsters have very bad depth perception and could easily walk off a platform that is too high and hurt themselves. You can make platforms yourself or buy them from certain websites.



Hideouts are another very important part of hamster enrichment. They provide protection and are great places for hamsters to start their burrows. You will want to provide multiple hideouts for your hamsters because hamsters generally don't like to be in open space very often as it makes them feel vulnerable. Hideouts come in wood, ceramic, terracotta clay, homemade cardboard hideouts, and more. When choosing wooden hideouts, you want to avoid anything with nails in case the hamster chews through it. You also want to avoid softwood hideouts as they could leak resin. You need to make sure that the entrances are big enough for whatever species of hamster you own. For Syrians and Chinese hamsters, the diameter needs to be at least 3" and for dwarf hamsters the diameter needs to be at least 2". Multi-chamber hideouts are very good for hamster enrichment as they simulate a hamster's burrow in the wild. Hamsters can choose different places to urinate, store food, and start their burrows. You can make your own multi-chamber hideouts as well. Here are some helpful links from Victoria Raechel on where to buy and how to make multi-chamber hideouts:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JFwFbKrTMI&t=0s> (DIY Tutorial)

<https://amzn.to/3c0cUcs>

<https://amzn.to/3c2kHq0>

<https://www.rodipet.co.uk/houses/rodipet-maze/>

<https://www.getzoo.de/einrichtung-zubehoer/haeuser>



All hamsters from GHR come with a fair amount of enrichment in their enclosures however we strongly recommend that you get even more and have some extra so you can change their enclosure up occasionally.