



Rabbits are curious and social animals who need activities to help prevent boredom. Here are some suggestions on engaging toys, activities, and socialization time that will help you be best buds with your bunny!

Natural Rabbit Behaviours

Just like us, rabbits are most comfortable when they can act naturally. Natural behaviours for rabbits include:

Chewing	Digging	Running
Burrowing	Foraging	Hopping

When we create opportunities for rabbits to express these natural behaviours it can help reduce unwanted ones, such as destructive chewing. It also increases well-being and can be a great way to bond with our pets as we watch them have fun. There are several ways you can engage with your rabbit inside and outside of their enclosure. Something as simple as weekly rotations of current housing items can be enriching and help prevent boredom as they re-learn their space and play with new toys.

It's also important to consider that rabbits are classified as a *prey species* – meaning they are hunted in the wild by predators. Because of this, new objects or a change in their environment can frighten them. When giving your rabbit something new, monitor how they respond so you can remove the item if they seem frightened or are avoiding the object.

Toys

Rabbits respond best to toys they can chew, toss around, and those that promote digging. Encouraging movement is also a great way to engage with your rabbit. Try tossing soft toys, and knocking items over such as balls, slinkies, and miniature plastic bowling pins. You can even repurpose hard plastic baby toys like keys on a ring or stacking cups. Some rabbits enjoy the act of throwing and will even engage in a game of fetch with you!

Animal Fact: Did you know that a rabbits' teeth never stop growing?

Chewing Toys

Giving your rabbit a variety of items to chew or shred helps maintain dental health and provides entertainment. When you give them an appropriate outlet to express their natural behaviours it can help reduce the chances of a bored bunny chewing your carpet or wires.

Providing your rabbit with hay, straw, cardboard, and other non-toxic materials can promote satisfying chewing. You can also use their favourite materials to create destroyable toys for your rabbit to enjoy.



Chew Toy Examples:

- Cardboard tubes stuffed with hay
- Nibble sticks are branches made of rabbit-safe woods, like apple and aspen that can be given to your rabbit to chew on.
 - *Note: Before giving any wood to your rabbit, ensure you know the type, that it is properly cleaned, and check that it's rabbit-safe. Many kinds of wood are not safe for rabbits – see the last page for examples.*
- Straw or wicker baskets can give your rabbit something to hop in and out of, and can also be a great item to chew provided they are all-natural, non-toxic, or made from untreated materials.
 - *Note: If considering giving your rabbit something not specifically designed to chew, make sure you confirm with your vet that the material is safe.*

Digging Toys

In the wild rabbits dig to hide and create a comfortable resting place. Giving your rabbit a designated space and materials to dig in allows them to do this without damaging their home -- or yours. If you can take your rabbit safely outdoors, some digging options to consider are a large plant pot or shallow children's pool full of soil. If you can't take your rabbit outside, you can provide them with a safe digging box for inside the home or a variety of materials in their cage as an outlet for digging.

Digging Toy Examples:

- Digging boxes can be made from any box big enough for your rabbit to turn around inside comfortably. Add items such as plain shredded paper, hay, toilet, paper tubes, or natural garden soils (without any chemicals) and allow your bunny to dig as much as they like.
- Towels are a great option for rabbits who enjoy "reorganizing" in their play. Simply provide them with a couple of smaller pet-safe towels, old t-shirts, or blankets and let them dig, burrow, and let them bunch the towels up to their hearts' content.

Burrowing Toys

Giving your rabbit spaces to burrow and hide will help them feel secure -- but make sure you provide an entrance and exit so your rabbit doesn't feel trapped. Some great options to support burrowing include:

- Hutches
- Tunnels
- Cardboard boxes

Foraging Games

Rabbits would normally spend a large portion of each day searching through their environment to find food. As pets, they commonly receive their meals in bowls at times we determine. This means they have fewer incentives to search and may eat their food faster. Having your rabbit search for food gives them something to do that makes them use both their body and brain.



Foraging Game Examples:

- Rather than using a standard food dish, scatter food around a safe space for them to seek out.
- Hide food in, behind, or under objects that your rabbit will have to move, like tubes, hutches, pots, and cardboard boxes.
- Wrap or contain food inside easily shreddable materials, like paper lunch bags or cardboard toilet paper rolls, and place them around a space for your rabbit to discover.
- Place food in a digging box to engage in both digging and foraging at the same time!
- Hang food from different levels to encourage them to reach and explore for food. Wedging vegetables between bars or hanging a feeding bowl with tempting snacks at a higher level than their regular food can encourage your rabbit to move around and search more.

Puzzle Feeders

Giving your rabbit food and treats in a container that challenges them is a great way to occupy their time and let them engage in an activity that rewards them.

Puzzle Feeder Examples:

- Rolling Feeder: Use a round or cylindrical object with a lid (something like a cleaned and empty coffee container), punch a few holes in the container, and place some food inside the container. Your rabbit can push the container around and enjoy having food dispersed.
- Commercially available puzzle feeders are also available at many retailers and are typically made of plastic or wood that encourage your rabbit to access compartments that store food.

Exercise and Social Time

If your rabbit spends most of the day within their enclosure, it's especially important to provide them with an environment that encourages play and movement. Dedicating at least an hour per day to spending time with your rabbit outside their cage gives them a chance to exercise and bond with you.

Exercise

It is ideal for your rabbit to spend at least an hour outside of their enclosures every day. Allowing them to explore a safe and contained area is stimulating. Just make sure you remove access for them to chew on household hazards, such as electrical wiring, furniture, or carpeting. As a bonus, while you're supervising their exploration of new areas to play, you get some quality bunny bonding time!

We suggest a space of around six feet in circumference or twenty-four square feet minimum – giving lots of room to move without risking some-bunny getting lost. Having all this extra space might lead your rabbit to run, hop, and jump around. If you'd like to give them even more exercise and bonding time, we've included a couple ideas for exercise games.

Animal Fact: Did you know bunnies can be litter trained and kept as free-roaming house rabbits in a room or larger space, provided it has been bunny-proofed?



Exercise Games:

- Hurdle jumping for rabbits can be a fun game! Start small and use treats to lure them over a small obstacle.
- Agility training is when you take a hurdle jump to the next level through regular short training sessions that teach your rabbit to jump over different materials and larger hurdles over time.

Social Time

As social creatures, it's important to spend time with your pet, especially if you are their only companion. To promote better bonding, set time aside each day to engage with them through activities like playing with toys, handling, brushing, feeding, or simply being in each other's close company.

Simple Social Time:

- Handling your rabbit should be done slowly and calmly. Rabbits are most comfortable on the ground, so do not pick up your rabbit or lift them unnecessarily.
- Petting can be soothing for you both. Rabbits are generally fond of having gentle touches on their forehead, cheeks, the base of their ears, and slow strokes down their back.
- Brushing your bunny once or twice a week can help them with their own natural grooming and be a relaxing activity for you and your pet. Longer haired breeds may need more frequent grooming to prevent problems like tangles and things becoming caught in their hair.

Caution for Cotton Tails

When buying or making toys, always check the materials are safe for your rabbit. Examine items and consider if their head could get stuck, if the material is safe to be chewed on by your bunny, and if there are any choking hazards present.

Unsafe Materials	
Stone fruit tree branches (cherry, peach, etc.)	Natural cedar, pine, oak, redwood, walnut or woods with tannins
Stained or treated woods	Cotton and polypropylene rope
Coloured paper	Items with glue or compacted sawdust
Foil or metal*	Loofah

Safe Materials	
Plain cardboard	Plain paper
Natural apple, willow or aspen wood	Hay or straw
Untreated grass mats	Untreated garden soil

**If giving your rabbit your recyclables, always double-check to make sure they are not lined with substances that could harm them.*

Did You Know?

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askthespecialist@edmontonhumane.com

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