

# Chinchilla Socialization



Chinchillas are very social creatures and need interaction with their own species. Housing chinchillas in pairs is extremely important as it provides natural socialization and keeps the chinchillas happy. Often chinchillas can take awhile before they are comfortable interacting with humans.

## Socialization Introduction

Chinchillas can often be shy when they arrive at a new home. Introducing yourself and socializing your chinchilla slowly is very important. Rushing interactions can easily make a chinchilla uncomfortable and lose any progress that has been made. Socializing a new chinchilla should be done in five steps. The amount of time each step will take will be different for each chinchilla. Move through the steps at your chinchilla's pace. All five steps could take a few days or even months.

### Step 1

When bringing a new chinchilla home, start out by just being present outside of their habitat. Talk to your chinchilla in a calm, soothing voice. Offer treats through the habitat bars but do not expect your chinchilla to take the treats from you right away.

Once your chinchilla starts taking treats from you through the bars and appears to be comfortable with your presence and voice you can move to step two.

### Step 2

Start opening the habitat doors, placing a treat in the habitat, and waiting for your chinchilla to take the treat. Once they have taken the treat, slowly close the doors. Keep doing this and move the treat closer and closer to you each time. Once the chinchilla is readily approaching you and taking treats, you can move to step three.

### Step 3

It is time to start placing your hand in the habitat. Place a treat on your palm and once your chinchilla takes the treat, slowly move your hand out and close the door. Move the treat closer and closer to your body each time. Once your chinchilla readily takes the treat from your hand and maybe even jumping on your hand, it is time to move to step four.

### Step 4

Do the same thing you did in step three, but this time you can slowly introduce petting. As your chinchilla comes to take a treat from your palm, slowly move your other hand to gently stroke your chinchilla's back once or twice. Once your chinchilla finishes the treat, slowly take your hands out and close the door

to their habitat. As you continue to repeat this step, increase the number of pets each time if your chinchilla is comfortable. When your chinchilla happily jumps into your hand and eats a treat while receiving pets, you can move to the final step.

### Step 5

Continue with what you were doing in step four. Start to slowly bring your other hand up to help support your chinchilla and scoop them up to your chest. Once your chinchilla has finished the treat in your hand and is calm, place them back in the habitat and close the doors. Keep doing this and extend the amount of time you are holding your chinchilla. If you are having to chase the chinchilla around their habitat, you will need to go back to previous steps.

**Tips:** Only give your chinchilla a few treats per day. Breaking a treat into smaller pieces will give you more opportunities for socializing each day.

Watch for signs of stress. Signs of stress include rapid breathing, teeth chattering, vocalizing, fur loss, biting, and whites of eyes exposed. If you see any of these signs, immediately stop and leave your chinchilla alone.

## Out of Habitat Playtime

Once your chinchilla is socialized and comfortable with you, you can start allowing them to play outside of their habitat in a chinchilla safe room. A larger open space gives them the opportunity to run, jump, and explore. Chinchillas are natural escape artists so chinchilla proofing a room is very important before you allow them to explore. All holes and hiding places (such as under furniture) should be covered up. There should be no exposed cords or wiring because chinchillas will likely chew them!

Chinchillas will chew anything left out for them, so if you do not want an item damaged, be sure to remove it from the room. Chinchillas commonly will chew on books, furniture, buttons of any kind, keyboards, and more. Even after thoroughly chinchilla proofing a room, you should always supervise your chinchilla when they are out of their habitat. Allow your chinchilla to roam freely.

