

# Gerbil Housing

## Cage Type

Because gerbils are social animals, it is best if you have a pair of same sex gerbils, preferably from the same litter. The minimum cage size for two gerbils is a 40 gallon tank. The bigger the cage the better because gerbils love running around and making tunnels. You can get a wire cage for your gerbils but make sure that the base is tall enough to fit around 8 inches of bedding as this is the minimum amount for your gerbils to burrow and nest in.

## Bedding

You want to make sure that the bedding you're using is sturdy enough that your gerbil's tunnels won't collapse but comfortable enough for them to sleep in. Paper pulp bedding is both comfortable and sturdy. You can mix in Timothy hay or orchard grass with paper pulp bedding to add to the stability of your gerbil's tunnels. Other acceptable substrates include aspen wood shavings, shredded paper bedding, and meadow hay.

Do not use pine or cedar bedding because this can cause respiratory issues for your gerbils. It's also important that you stay away from cotton or wool bedding because these can get tangled around your gerbil's limbs and they are not digestible. Also avoid scented bedding because gerbils have an acute sense of smell and scented bedding can easily irritate their noses.

## Set Up

When you are setting up their enclosure there are a few essential items that you'll need. These items include: a 10 inch or larger running wheel, a sand bath, a water bottle or water bowl, hideouts, and chew toys. Avoid using plastic products for your gerbil's hideouts, bowls, and toys. Gerbils are notorious chewers and plastic is dangerous for them to ingest. It is best to stick with safe wood products that can be found in pet stores.

Do not use wire running wheels. Lots of pet stores will sell wire or mesh wheels, but these are unsafe for gerbils to use. Their paws can get stuck in the gaps, and they can get what is called bumblefoot, which is a bacterial infection or abscess caused by a cut or scrape on the foot. Only use solid surface running wheels, these are the safest options for your gerbils.

Be sure to use lots of tunnels above and underneath your gerbil's bedding. Gerbils love to burrow and find places to nest. Hideouts such as cardboard boxes, wooden houses, or wood bridges are great options for your gerbils to make nests in.

Since gerbils don't bathe themselves in water, make sure to give them a sand bath large enough for them to roll around in. Glass containers, jars, boxes, or large shallow bowls are suitable options for a sand bath. Be sure that the sand you are using is bacteria free. Do not use chinchilla dust, it is made differently than sand and can cause respiratory issues.

## Maintenance

If you have a large tank you can clean their enclosure once or twice a month. Keep the top half of the bedding by placing it in a garbage bag or bin and clean out the bottom half of the bedding. Place the top half of the bedding back into the enclosure and add new bedding. You want to keep some of the "old" bedding so your gerbils can continue to have their scent in their enclosure. Cleaning out all of the bedding and replacing it with new bedding gets rid of all of their scent, as if they are in a whole new environment which can be stressful for them.

You can also spot clean their enclosure weekly, including cleaning their sand bath by sifting out any bedding, food, or poop, cleaning their wheel if necessary, and changing out any spots of bedding where your gerbil regularly pees and poops.



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