

Playtime For Rabbits, Guinea Pigs, Hamsters And Ferrets

These games and activities are fun for both you and your small animal pet.

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Playtime is an opportunity for your pet to get exercise and bond with you.

Dogs are famous for being great playmates for people. Even cats are known for their penchant for interactive play with their owners. But can you play with small mammals like rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters and ferrets? The answer is yes!

Before you strike up a game with any of these animals, make sure that your pet is comfortable with being handled. If you have developed a bond with your pet through repeated gentle handling, your pet should be up for a good game with you. If your playtime will take place outside your pet's cage, make certain the play area is pet-proofed. For rabbits, guinea pigs and hamsters, this means covering electrical cords with plastic tubing or putting them out of reach, removing any items you don't want chewed, and plugging up any small spaces where your pet might tuck himself away and out of your reach. Be sure doors are secure, windows are shut and other pets can't get into the room. If you'll be playing in the kitchen, bathroom or garage, put away any hazardous products your pet might get into, such as anti-freeze or cleanser.

For ferrets, follow the same procedure as pet-proofing for rabbits, guinea pigs and hamsters, but also protect objects that your ferret might reach if he decides to climb. Limit your play sessions to not more than 20 to 30 minutes a day with your small pets. If your pet seems tired or loses interest, take a break and try it again another day.

Rabbit Playtime Tips

Some rabbit owners are surprised to find that their bunnies love to play. Below are some suggestions for interactive play with your rabbit.

Toppling. Rabbits like to knock things over. Get some wooden or plastic blocks and stack them up in front of your rabbit. Step back and watch as he happily knocks them over with his nose. **Tossing.** Give your bunny a toy he can toss in the air. Human baby toys work great, along with bird toys. Rabbits seem to really enjoy grabbing these toys in their teeth and flipping them.

Find the treat. Get one of your rabbit's favorite treats and put it inside your closed fist. Hold your fists out to your bunny, and when he touches the hand holding the treat, open your hand and give it to him. Do this several times, and he will quickly figure out that he gets rewarded when he chooses the correct hand. **Guinea Pig Playtime Tips**

When it comes to getting your guinea pig to play with you, you'll need to be a bit creative. Guinea pigs love to play with each other, so you just need to convince your cavy that you're just as fun as a member of his own kind.

Playing ball. Guinea pigs like to play with balls. Cat balls with bells inside are a particular favorite. Roll the ball to your guinea pig and see if he pushes it back to you. **Running tunnels.** Set up a series of tunnels for your guinea pig, made from plastic tunnels you can buy at a pet supply store, or from boxes you've opened up and taped together. You can even create a maze of tunnels, with a food treat at the end. Your guinea pig will have fun figuring out how to get to the exit.

Hamster Playtime Tips

Although hamsters are small and most tend to be pretty independent, you can still have fun playing with them.

Rolling. The most fun you can have playing with your hamster is with a hamster ball. Place your hamster inside the ball in a secure area where other pets won't bother him. If the area is carpeted, all the better. Watch him run around the room while he's inside the ball. This is not only great fun for your hamster, but it's a blast to watch. **Tubes.** Give your hamster some cardboard tubes to run through. The type used for mailing is the best. You can tape several together to create a series of tunnels. Put a treat at the end of the tunnel to give your hamster incentive to make the run.

Ferret Playtime Tips

Ferrets are one of the most playful pets around. They love to play on their own and with their humans, and they are always up for a good game of something. Below are some suggestions.



Digging for treasure. Fill a box with shredded paper, dirt or all-natural packing peanuts and bury a treat or your ferret's favorite toy inside. Then let him dig to his heart's content as he tries to find it. Chasing game. Get a feathered cat toy or a rope dog toy and drag it across the room. Your ferret will have a blast chasing after it.

Tag. Get down on your hands and knees and chase your ferret. When you catch up to him, ruffle his fur, and then "run" away from him, encouraging him to chase you. Once he figures out this game, he won't want to stop. Playing with your small pet will do wonders to deepen the bond between you while also helping your pet get much needed exercise. Plus, you'll both have tons of fun!