

## A Lonely Gerbil - To Befriend Or Not To Befriend

**Should you get a lonely male gerbil a male or female friend or companion?**

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**Q:** I have a male gerbil named Ronny. I think he might be a bit lonely, so I am thinking of getting him a buddy. Should I get a female? What is your advice?

**A:** Gerbils are social animals that enjoy living with others of their kind for a feeling of safety, and to play, groom and sleep together. Your male would probably like the company of a baby or young male. The problem is that you cannot just put two gerbils together, unless they are both under 6 weeks old.

To introduce adults, start with a freshly cleaned, neutral tank that is split by a sturdy mesh wire barrier. You can also put a smaller wire cage inside the tank. Swap the gerbils often between areas, and then try them together after a week or two to see if they are ready to get along. Always wear gloves when introducing two gerbils. If they fight, they chomp anything that touches them, even a helping hand! The American Gerbil Society website has a handbook with a whole section on introducing gerbils.

As far as putting together a male and a female, you would get a lot of babies — a litter every five weeks. However, an older female (over 2 1/2) can be a nice match for an older male that loses his buddy. She should be too old to produce babies at that age.