

Rat-Proofing And Educating Others About Pet Rats

What's the best way to educate parents or others about pet rats and the best way to rat-proof a room?

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Q: I'm looking forward to getting a pet rat as soon as I hopefully convince my parents. They don't seem to understand how sweet rats really are. Do you have any good things I might be able to say to help them give the idea a chance?

Also, I'm not sure how to rat-proof my bedroom. I'm going to get my room cleaned up, as in a full cleaning consisting of a dust, vacuum and all the things to make it surely spotless. But I'm worried about my rat getting into places where I can't get. I have a pretty big bedroom, and it's the typical teenager's room. I have a lot of small places I'm worried about my rat getting to — under my bed, under my dresser, behind my dresser — the possibilities are endless! I won't be able to let my rat out of my room, so I want to make it the safest place for him/her.

Please help me find out all the necessities for keeping my new rat completely safe in a big room.

A: The best way to convince your parents that rats are wonderful pets is by taking them to a local rat show or event. Check online to find clubs or organizations in your area, most will have a calendar of events. If there are no events in your area, look for a listing of local breeders, most would be happy to meet with you and your parents.

If those options fail, look for some good articles or magazines (like Critters USA or Rats, which are available in most large pet stores) that are designed to educate people about small animals. Then have a meeting with your parents and let them ask you questions, this will show them that you've done your research and you really understand what you're getting into. Sometimes that's enough to convince them that you're really ready for the responsibility. Promising to keep your room clean and actually doing it, helps too.

Once you convince your parents that rats (plural, they must, must, must have a same-sex cagemate) are the right pet for you, then you must focus on a safe environment.

Rather than trying to rat-proof your entire room, just set up a large card table or folding table to use as a play space. Place some boxes and rat toys on the table along with your rat's cage, then open the cage door and let the rats play. This gives your rats extra space to play but keeps them confined to a safe area that is easy to clean.

Good luck discussing pet rats with your parents and enjoy your new pets.

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