

Ideal Gerbil Cage

How to best equip your gerbil's home.

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Gerbil Housing Options

You have several options when deciding on a cage for your pet gerbil. Glass aquariums are a popular option. These containers are inexpensive, easy to clean and allow you to observe a gerbil more pleasurably. Most importantly, the gerbil will not be able to chew through this kind of container.

If you decide on an aquarium, you will need a mesh or wire lid securely fitted on top in order to provide air circulation. This will also prevent the gerbil from jumping out of the cage and keep house cats from preying on the gerbil. You can buy the lid at a store or construct it yourself out of hardware cloth.

Another caging option is a wire cage. These are great for connecting cages with tubes to construct multiple cage units. However, wire cages can make the surrounding area messy because bedding will spill out and are easy for the gerbil to chew through. You must also assure to select a cage with bars close enough together that the gerbil will not escape or get its foot or tail caught in it. Bars 1/2-inch apart at most is recommended.

Plastic cages are another option. These tend to be more attractive to the owner but provide little ventilation to the gerbil and can easily be chewed through. Also note that you must pay extra attention to the maintenance of these cages because they smell more quickly.

Cage Size

When selecting the cage keep in mind that gerbils are social creatures. They need lots of room to burrow and run and enjoy other gerbil interaction. A rule of thumb is 5-gallons of space per gerbil, as recommended by the American Gerbil Society. If you have a pair of gerbils, a 10-gallon cage – or an average base of 12 inches by 20 inches – would be ideal. If you decide to go with a bigger cage, make sure you can keep it clean and well-maintained.

Accessories To Include

Be sure to equip your pet gerbil's cage with the necessities. Secure a 4-ounce water bottle to the side of the cage so no water will drain out and always keep it filled. Also include a nest box and sand bath with chinchilla dust bath or regular playground sand. Your gerbil will appreciate these separate areas for bathing, nesting and secreting waste.

Also provide a running wheel. A solid-floored exercise wheel works best.

Toys are a must and should appeal to the gerbil's desire to chew and burrow. Something as simple as a four-by-four with large holes drilled into it will be great for climbing and chewing. Adding new toilet paper rolls and heavy cardboard boxes daily will keep your gerbil entertained. If possible, construct different levels within the cage for it to jump around on. But keep in mind, gerbils love a challenge and constantly changing their surrounds – adding new toys or providing different climbing platforms – will stimulate their creativity and keep them happy.