

Introducing Your Gerbil

What to do when your family and other gerbils meet your new gerbil.

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Meeting The Family

If you bought your new gerbil from a breeder, it should be fully tame and comfortable around humans. During the first couple of days while it gets used to its new home, only take it out of its cage for about 10 minutes at a time.

If the gerbil is not fully tame, you must work with it a little longer. At first, have only one adult work with the animal. To get the gerbil used to you, remove any toys and food from its cage that might distract it and lay your arm inside. Keep still while the gerbil sniffs and explores you. Do not hover your arm above your gerbil, as this reminds it of a predator.

Once the gerbil is comfortable with your arm in the cage, try taking it out. Do not grab the gerbil. Instead, place a treat in your hand so it climbs on. You can also transport it with a cardboard tube. Keep very still and allow the gerbil to run around your arms. Do not cuddle or confine the gerbil.

When you feel the gerbil is comfortable with one adult, introduce it to the rest of the family. Remind family members to keep steady while holding the gerbil and to not confine it. Have them hold treats for the gerbil so that it associates people with good things.

Meeting The Other Gerbils

Because gerbils love to socialize, it often takes little effort to introduce them to your other gerbils. However, when first introducing your new small pet to the clan, supervise their interaction and be aware of their personalities.

Some gerbil combinations get along better than others. Siblings, especially brothers, get along best, but sisters or two females tend to get more aggressive as they mature. Young gerbils, 6 to 8 weeks old, can be placed together with ease, as can a male gerbil and a baby. However, do not introduce a female gerbil and a baby.

The first time you put the gerbils in the same cage, separate them with a wire-mesh barrier. This allows the gerbils to get used to each other's smell without being able to touch each other. After a few days, put the gerbils on opposite sides of the cage. After a week has passed, remove the barrier and supervise their interaction.

Observe how the gerbils interact. Warning behaviors that signal that the gerbils are not getting along include puffing of the fur, chasing and wrestling. If any of these behaviors occur, separate the gerbils immediately. Wear a thick glove because gerbils bite when agitated. Allow the gerbils more time separated by the wire barrier and reintroduce them after a few more days.

If the gerbils get along, they lick and sniff each other. They have fully accepted each other if they sleep together. However, it is possible that two gerbils will never be compatible.