

## Handling Hamsters

**Know how to handle a hamster before you try to pick it up.**

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Photo Courtesy Linda C. Brown

Allow a new hamster time to get comfortable with you and its new home before handling it.

Hamsters are easily tamed, but it does take some time. While some learn more quickly, expect to spend a month or more taming a hamster. By patiently following a few simple steps, you can tame a hamster and teach it to enjoy being handled.

### Where To Start

Start by giving a hamster time to settle in to its new home. Let it explore its cage while you watch or talk to it quietly. Do this for at least a week. When the hamster doesn't scurry away at the sight of you, try offering it a special treat from your fingers. Most hamsters will be happy to accept your offering.

Again, give the hamster at least a week to become accustomed to taking food from you. Once the hamster is willing to take food from you, move on to picking it up.

### Let A Hamster Come To You

Hold out your hand, palm up, and see if the hamster will walk onto it. Do this several times until the hamster comes onto your hand willingly. Be sure to reward it with a treat every time it does so. When you reach this stage, you can start accustoming the hamster to being picked up.

Let the hamster walk onto your hand, and gently place your other hand over the hamster's back or cup it with both hands so it won't try to jump off. Do this over a table or while you're sitting on the ground so the hamster doesn't fall very far if it squirms out of your hand. Don't hold it too tightly. This is uncomfortable and frightening for the hamster and may cause it to bite.

At first, hold your hamster only for a minute or two. As the hamster learns to trust you, gradually increase the length of time you hold it. Never pick up a hamster unless you're in a hamster-proof or escape-proof area.

### Observe Hamster Reactions

During the training process, be mindful of your hamster's feelings. Back off if it seems nervous or aggressive. It's OK to go back to the previous step if your hamster was more comfortable at that stage. Let it progress at its own pace.

If friends or family members want to hold the hamster, show them how to do it. Be sure they hold the hamster over a table or while they're sitting down so the hamster won't hurt itself if it falls. Avoid letting young children hold the hamster. They can accidentally squeeze too hard or drop the hamster. Instead, let them gently stroke the hamster with one finger while you hold it.