

Rabbit Playtime And Toys

Appeal to your rabbit's playtime needs before it destroys your house.

By Laura Doering

Does your rabbit have a penchant for nibbling the bristles off your broom or has it taken a liking to your new area rug — that is — “liking” to dig it up? Has your pet run off with your car keys or tossed them behind the couch? And have the lights in your home gone out unexpectedly because a curious bunny found the light cord too good to resist? Rabbits can find ways to entertain themselves if left to their own devices. Why not take back your home, and offer your rabbit safer and saner alternatives with an assortment of toys?

Think like a bunny and look for items that offer an outlet for your pet's wild instincts:

Instinct 1: Digging and burrowing are natural rabbit behaviors — the key to life with a pet rabbit is to channel these behaviors away from your rugs and carpet and onto items meant for bunny destruction. Your rabbit might enjoy scratching at and chewing untreated grass mats. Even a large, flattened cardboard box will do, but don't forget to remove the staples.

Instinct 2: Rabbits are natural burrowers. Recreate an underground environment with large tubes for your rabbit to run through and relax in. You can find tubes up to 5 feet long at home improvement stores, or link shorter tubes together. Be sure to pull out the wax coating inside the tube before letting your rabbit loose in it because it can be toxic if ingested. A large cardboard box also offers a place for your rabbit to burrow, as will a paper grocery store bag left on its side with the front wide open so your rabbit can hop right in. Don't be surprised if your rabbit chews its way out to the other side.

Instinct 3: A rabbit's teeth continuously grow, which helps explain why rabbits like to chew things; it's a good way to keep tooth length in check. Chewing the wrong items can put a rabbit in harm's way — carpet fibers can cause gastrointestinal distress, a gnawed-on appliance/electrical cord can cause electrocution and some common houseplants are poisonous to rabbits.

Safe chew items include:

Sisal rope

Untreated willow baskets — no varnish or paint

Paper bags filled with healthy treats

Vegetable-dyed wood blocks (the color should run when you wet it; sprayed or painted-on coloring, such as acrylic, can be toxic)

Untreated, dried apple twigs.

Instinct 4: Although there might not be a lot of documented sightings of wild rabbits throwing objects around, many rabbit owners have seen their pets do this. Perhaps it is a pet rabbit's way of saying “Watch this!” Toddler-safe plastic toys are generally safe for rabbits and plastic car keys are sure to be tossed and carried around by a playful bunny. Plastic, parrot-safe “foot toys” also make great throw items, especially those that ring or jingle when tossed.