

## Let The Rabbit Games Begin

**Keep your bunny physically and mentally stimulated with playtime and toys.**

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Click For InfoPlay is an important and essential part of a rabbit's day-to-day life. Play provides bunnies with both mental and physical exercise, it helps to increase the bond between bunny and owner, and it curbs potential misbehavior due to boredom.

### Rabbit Games Defined

What should you play? The possibilities are endless. Playtime need not be anything super fancy, noted Lisa Matheson of The Busy Bunny in San Bruno, California. "It's fun to get on the floor on the same level with your bunny," she said. "If you're reading a magazine, playtime with your bunny can be something as simple as letting it nibble on the pages of the magazine you are reading."

For the more adventurous, rabbit games can include anything from hide-and-seek around the house to agility and/or clicker training, either simply for the fun and pleasure of it or for competition. Regardless of what activities you do with your rabbit, keep in mind that the games and playtime should be fun first and foremost from the bunny's perspective and ideally should tie into some of its natural instincts.

### Nature's Way

Rabbits naturally like to dig and burrow. Use these instincts when coming up with games to play with your rabbit.

Another favorite among rabbit owners is hide-and-seek. Any number of variations can be done with this game. Use an empty concrete form cylindrical tunnel (available from hardware stores) as a place to put a toy for the rabbit; they can run through the tunnel and then you "seek" them. Some bunnies love to start playing hide-and-seek by hiding under a table, for example. This can turn into peekaboo when the owner "finds" the bunny.

For rabbits that like to toss, playing ball can be a fun activity. Use a plastic ball such as a cat toy and roll the ball toward the bunny. Often the rabbit will nudge the ball back to you. This keeps a rabbit mentally interested.

### The Next Level

Depending on a rabbit's interest and ability, and an owner's dedication, clicker training and agility training are great ways to increase a rabbit's exercise while bonding with its owner.

Agility training is another popular activity for rabbits and their owners. Marna Kazmaier of South Dakota, who has been a rabbit owner for 35 years, said agility training ties into rabbits' natural instincts to run and jump, as shown on her website.

As for any playtime with your rabbit, bonding is key. "I always tell folks to first start just bonding with the rabbit," Kazmaier said. "The rabbit must know its name and come when called, as well as a few other simple commands. If a person spends the time with the rabbit to teach it to walk on a leash and if the rabbit has learned a few commands, such as 'no,' 'over', 'whoa' and the like, the pair [rabbit and owner] is more than ready to start setting up a little agility course."

Remember that any training or agility activities for rabbits should not be stressful for the animal. "If you are training or competing, always bring your good humor," Kazmaier said. "Your rabbit does not have an agenda; it does not care about winning or impressing anyone. Your rabbit cares about being with you, having fun and receiving the attention."