

Guide to a Happy and Healthy Hamster

Appropriate space, exercise and enrichment are important for ensuring your hamster is thriving both mentally and physically! Many people don't realize just how much space a hamster needs, but it is much more than the typical hamster cage provides. A bin cage is bigger, providing plenty of room for your hamster to engage in and enjoy their many natural behaviors.

Did you know that in the wild, hamsters will run up to 5-10 miles per night as they search and forage for food? Keeping a hamster in less than 200 square inches of space is the equivalent of a dog living in a bathroom, and studies have shown that small cages lead to stress and cage aggression, two things we don't want for our furry friends! This guide will help you provide a space for your hamster to be happy and healthy.



ESSENTIAL HAMSTER SUPPLY LIST

- ✓ **At least 450 square inches of unbroken floor space.** Connecting small cages to each other or having multiple stories cannot provide the same benefits or enrichment as floor space. Flooring should be solid, since feet can get injured or stuck in mesh or wire.
 - 600+ square inches for dwarf hamsters and 800+ square inches for Syrian hamsters.
- ✓ **Exercise wheel.** Large enough for the hamster to run with a straight back.
 - 8-10" for dwarf hamsters and 10-12" for Syrian hamsters.
- ✓ **Safe bedding since hamsters LOVE to burrow!** Minimum 4-6" with some areas of 6+ inches. Deep bedding enhances welfare and decreases odor — win-win!
 - Soft paper bedding should be used for the majority of the cage.
 - Add Aspen wood shavings.
 - Avoid scented bedding; cotton, pine or cedar substrates; or pellets only.
- ✓ **Water bottle.**
- ✓ **Food dish.**
- ✓ **Bowl and sand for sand bath.**
 - Provide undyed aquarium sand or calcium-free reptile sand.
- ✓ **2 hiding houses/areas.**
- ✓ **Wood chews.**
- ✓ **Other toys & enrichment.**

DIY HAMSTER BIN CAGE

Making your own bin cage is easy and affordable and ensures your hamster has the appropriate amount of space. A bin cage is easy to move and clean, and it allows you to add and rearrange enrichment items to keep your hamster busy and engaged!

Supplies:

- 100+ quart plastic storage bin — quality is important! Makes sure it has a minimum of 450 square inches of floor space, is sturdy and has a locking lid.
- Sharpie.
- Exacto knife or dremel to cut through plastic lid.
- Sandpaper (optional).
- Drill.
- Tape measure.
- 1/4" or 1/2" hardware cloth.
- Wire cutters/snips.
- Zip ties.
- Duct tape — colored tape can add some fun!



Instructions:

1. **Place the lid face down and use the Sharpie to draw an outline of the area to be cut.** This is where you will be placing the hardware cloth. Be sure not to get too close to the edges of the lid, but use as large an area as possible to ensure proper ventilation (minimum 18" x 8").
2. **Cut out the rectangle using your exacto knife or dremel.** Start by making scores in the plastic, gradually deepening your cut each time until you are able to pop out the plastic piece. Smooth any sharp edges with sandpaper or cover with duct tape.
3. **Drill holes in the lid where the zip ties are going to be placed to secure the hardware cloth.** It helps to mark the spots first with a Sharpie. We recommend every 2-3 inches.
4. **Measure the hole in the lid with an extra inch on all sides and mark hardware cloth.**
5. **Use the wire cutters to cut the hardware cloth.** Cut as close to the edge of the metal as possible so that you don't have any sharp points.
6. **Attach the hardware cloth tightly to the bottom/inside of the lid with the zip ties.**
7. **Cut the excess length of the zip ties.**
8. **Cover the edges of the hardware cloth and the zip ties with duct tape** for extra reinforcement and to cover any sharp edges from the hardware cloth.

HELPFUL HAMSTER RESOURCES

- **Bin video tutorial:** <https://youtu.be/i5e-2yKLX2Q>.
- **Bin instructions with photos:** hamsterguru.com/how-to-make-a-hamster-bin-cage.
- **Wee Companions (weecompanions.org) offers hamster care info:** <https://bit.ly/3maY5bL>.
- **The Ultimate Hamster Starter Kit:** <https://bit.ly/3Dr95c7>.
- **Hamster enrichment video:** <https://youtu.be/sxVEEqE6yl>.
- **DIY small pet toys:** <https://youtu.be/6Wc9BjIpyeg>.