

Rabbit-to-Rabbit Introduction

BEFORE GETTING ANOTHER RABBIT

Rabbits are social animals and like us, are happiest with a bunny friend - it's never a bad thing for your bunny to have someone to keep them company! Bonded pairs of rabbits spend a lot of their time snuggling, grooming each other, and form incredibly close bonds with one another.

Keep in mind however that not all rabbits will bond with each other, and it may be a few tries before finding a pair of rabbits who get along. When planning on getting a second rabbit, remember that they cannot live in the same enclosure together at first and there's a chance they may prefer to be neighbors (living side by side) instead of living in the same enclosure.

STARTING OUT

Both rabbits should be over 12 weeks and spayed or neutered before introducing them. Spaying and neutering makes for healthier animals, and without hormones in the equation, bonding them together is significantly easier. Wait 2-4 weeks for females, and 4-6 weeks for males for the incision to heal, and hormones to dissipate. Male rabbits can take up to 6 weeks to become fully sterile after they've been neutered.

Baby rabbits who grew up together may have a false "baby bond", and seemingly get along. However, territorial feelings and aggression increase with maturity as their hormones develop. The easiest way to fix this behavior is to spay and neuter the rabbits. Male and female pairings tend to have the highest rate of success when choosing two rabbits to pair, although same-sex pairs are not uncommon.

Begin with side-by-side enclosures approximately 3-4 inches apart so that they can still see & smell each other, but not directly touch. Provide at least one hide in each enclosure so they can separate themselves from seeing each other if they choose to. Once they seem comfortable in one another's presence, try swapping some of the rabbits' bedding materials over to transfer scents. If the rabbits are not on any sort of bedding, you can rub a fleece blanket on the rabbits and swap the blankets between them to transfer scents.

INTRODUCTIONS AND BEHAVIORS

Your rabbits' first introduction should be in a location where neither rabbit has been housed before. Keep the area empty at first so you can watch their interactions. If the introductions are going well, you can begin to introduce toys and hides, be sure there is enough for both rabbits to share. Start with short visits of 5 minutes, gradually increasing the time they spend together if they are going well. Introductions should be supervised until your rabbits are bonded.

Positive Behaviors	Neutral Behaviors	Negative Behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sitting or Lying Side-By-Side• Grooming Each Other• Seeking Each Other for Positive Interactions• Behaving Normally or Relaxed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nipping at Fur• Minor, Short Chasing• Occasional Mounting• Thumping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biting/Breaking Skin• Excessive Chasing• Excessive Mounting• Excessive Thumping• Fighting• Growling• Circling

While some seemingly negative behaviors such as mounting are normal during introductions, be sure to not let them escalate to offensive or aggressive behaviors. Do not let a rabbit mount another rabbit's head, it can be dangerous if the mounted rabbit decides to bite. If a fight does begin, quickly separate the rabbits. Oven mitts and garden gloves can help keep you safe from injury while separating rabbits.

HOW TO TELL IF RABBITS ARE BONDED

Once the rabbits are spending multiple hours daily together without any problems, they can be introduced to their intended long-term living space (initially under supervision). Try supervising your bonded rabbits' overnight and be sure that they do not get into any scuffles over a 12-hour period. Once the rabbits have shared their space politely for over 12 hours, they should be able to live together in the same space indefinitely.

Once rabbits are bonded, they should not be separated. Rabbits mourn the loss of a partner and being separated cause serious physical side effects. If you're taking one rabbit to the vet, speak to your veterinarian about their partner coming along as well. Playdates are not recommended between two rabbits who will not remain together after the introduction.

FURTHER READING

- rabbit.org/care/bonding/
- sandiegorabbits.org/education/template-enm2t-r66be
- oxbowanimalhealth.com/blog/breaking-down-bunny-bonding-6-tips-and-tricks