

# Introducing Rabbits



Adding a new rabbit to a home with a resident rabbit can be great fun and offers both your family and your rabbit extra companionship. However, rabbits need time to build relationships. The more quarrel-free you can keep the early stages of the relationship, the stronger it will be. That is why it is crucial to proceed slowly, even if it seems as though the rabbits are getting along without any problem.

## Setting the Scene

Help your new rabbit settle into your home by keeping him or her in a separate room or enclosure with a litter box, food, water, hide-a-way, bed, and toys for two weeks. It is especially important to keep rabbits separate for this long if they have been recently spayed or neutered; male rabbits can be fertile for two weeks after surgery. Let your rabbit become comfortable with his or her new surroundings. Do not allow the rabbits to interact at this time.

### METHOD ONE:

1. It is necessary to bring your rabbit to the adoption center to allow them to pick out their new companion.
2. If they get along well in the adoption center, put them in the same carrier on the car ride home.
3. Set up an enclosure in neutral territory (not where your rabbit normally rests, plays, or uses the litter box) and supervise the rest of the day.
4. Sleep in the room that their enclosure is in so that you may quickly wake and break up any squabbles (with noise or a dustpan; never use your hands).
5. If they get along through the night and are lying together, grooming, and/or eating together, it is safe to leave them alone together.

### METHOD TWO:

#### First Interactions

1. It is necessary to bring your rabbit to the adoption center to allow them to pick out their new companion.
2. If they get along well in the adoption center, put them in the same carrier on the car ride home.
3. Put the rabbits in separate side-by-side pens so they can see and smell each other, but far enough apart that they cannot touch one another.

#### Supervise Interactions

1. Introduce the rabbits in a neutral territory, so neither rabbit feels defensive. A space no larger than 10 feet by 12 feet such as a bathroom, playpen, or standard bathtub is ideal.
2. Nipping and fur pulling is common, so act as a “chaperone” as they get to know each other. You can sit down with both rabbits and pet them to help them feel more comfortable.
3. Sometimes, when rabbits fight, they can cause severe harm to one another, so it is important to have equipment to separate them. If your rabbits begin to fight, make as much noise as you can to separate them. A dustpan is a great tool to separate the two.

#### Final Steps

1. Continue with daily interactions, increasing the meeting times from 10 minutes to 30-40 minutes at a time.

## Introducing Rabbits *(continued)*

2. When rabbits begin to lie down together and groom one another, it is safe to leave them alone together.

Introductions often take time. Some rabbit-to-rabbit introductions go very smoothly, while others may take weeks or months before the rabbits learn to tolerate each other. The best thing to do is to go as slowly as necessary—do not rush the introduction. Please remember that you are hoping and working for a long-term relationship; being patient at first will pay off! Rushing the introduction will often cause serious problems which may take longer to solve—or in some cases, may never be solved.