

Rat Introductions



Adding a new rat to a home with a resident rat can be great fun and offers both your family and your rat extra companionship. However, rats 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 rats are getting along without any problem.

Setting the Scene

Help your new rat settle into your home by keeping her in a separate enclosure with a litter box, food, water bottle, hide-a-way, bed or hammock, and toys for about two weeks. Let your rat become comfortable with her new surroundings. Do not allow the rats to interact during this time. You also want to make sure your new rat does not have any diseases that can be spread to your resident rat(s). It is important to watch for any signs of illness, most of which will be present within the first week. Make sure to handle your newly adopted rat after handling your resident rat to reduce the spread of possible diseases.

First Interactions

1. Place the enclosures near one another so the rats can see and smell each other, but far enough apart so they cannot touch each other.
2. Switch the rats to each other's enclosures to allow them first-hand experience with each other's scents.

Supervise Interactions

1. Introduce the rats in a neutral territory, so neither rat feels defensive. The bathtub is ideal.
2. Introduce the rats in an area where your resident rat plays often. It is helpful to place both rats in your lap at the same time.

Final Steps

1. Create a new cage for both rats to live in. Clean out the cage thoroughly and rearrange furniture, food bowls, water bottles, and toys so it appears to be new to the rats.
2. Dab each rat with something non-toxic like vanilla extract so that they smell the same.
3. Put both rats in the new cage. Morning time is better for transitions because they are sleepier.

Introductions often take time. Some rat-to-rat introductions go very smoothly, while others may take weeks or months before the rats 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 resolve.