



**Archie's Exotic Pet Rescue**

[www.archiesrescue.ca](http://www.archiesrescue.ca)

# Rabbit Play Education Sheet



## How Rabbits Play With Each Other

Rabbits are sociable creatures. When you adopt a rabbit, it is always best to adopt a pair of rabbits. By doing this, it avoids the loneliness and possible depression that a rabbit will experience if they are alone. It is also common for rabbits to participate in activities together.

- When a rabbit or a pair of rabbits are playing, they send out subtle signals. These signals can be deceptive in that it appears that they are fighting. Some of these signs include small nips on each other. From that point, they may begin to make small jumps or hops. These small jumps are actually going to appear as 'hop backs,' as if they had been startled. When a rabbit or pair of rabbits are in an area where they have plenty of room, they will start to hop and jump. This activity will usually commence after the playful nipping. The nipping is a form of seeking the attention of the 'friend.'
- Some other signs of playful behavior are ripping or shredding up of newspapers or cardboard. Rabbits, when playing, will also help each other to "dig holes." When they are ready to share, they will play a game of chase. It is often associated with the human form of 'tag' that is played by children. Rabbits may also seem to compete at jumping.

The time to worry is if you notice that one of the rabbits is sitting in a corner or acting somewhat withdrawn. This could be a sign that the other rabbit is acting like a bully and being mean. This is the behavior you would want to stop as soon as it is noticed.

- Bunnies like to throw things around, so anything that rolls or rattles is a winner! A rabbit's vision is almost 360° so they can keep a lookout for predators. Provide perches on different levels, this will give them plenty of things to look at and keep them exercised as they have to hop up and down.



## How To Play with Your Rabbit

1

Schedule regular play periods. Rabbits tend to thrive on routine. The best way to encourage your rabbit to play with you is to have regularly scheduled playdates.

- Rabbits are generally the most active early in the morning or later in the evening, so these are good times to play with them.
- Be careful when initiating playtime. Rabbits prefer to be left alone when eating, using the litter box, grooming themselves, and sleeping. If you notice your rabbit engaging in these behaviors, let him finish before initiating play. (Rabbits usually sleep with their eyes open, so check if their nose is moving or not to tell!) A good idea is to open your rabbit's pen, if they are in one, to signal that it's time to play. Then they will be able to come out when ready.



2

Get down on your rabbit's level. You want to make sure they feel safe and comfortable with you as a playmate.

- To get down on the rabbit's level, you can sit, crouch, or lie down on the floor.
- Allow your rabbit to sniff you, sit on your lap or back, and interacting with you. Some rabbits like pets and attention, but most prefer independence during playtime.

3

Be patient. Rabbits can be timid, especially at first. You should not push playtime or certain toys if your rabbit seems uninterested. Let the rabbit adjust at their own pace.

- Do not engage in rough house with a rabbit the way you might with a cat or dog. Rabbits are prey animals and naturally timid and physically fragile—this could easily result in injury or your rabbit feeling frightened around you.
- Greet your rabbit cheerfully before you open his cage, saying their name. This will help them to associate you with pleasantness and make them more likely to want to interact.
- Pet your rabbit while giving them other positive feedback, such as friendly verbal cues or healthy treats. You want them to associate your touch with safety and happiness.

4

Allow your rabbit to decide when playtime ends. It is important to respect their independence.

- Rabbits signal when they're ready to play by circling their owners feet or tugging at sleeves or pant legs. Wait for them to signal that they are ready before bringing out the toys.
- When your rabbit seems to lose interest, and tries to return to their pen, let them. Rabbits often want security, and they'll resist playtime if it becomes something that feels forced.
- Rabbits do not always want to play for the same amount of time—they might want to play for an hour or for only 10 minutes. Do not push to play more than they want.

