

Enrichment for Small Pets

Small pets can bring so much joy and entertainment into our lives! But have you ever wondered how to ensure they're having just as much fun? Beyond giving them spacious homes, there are plenty of creative ways to enrich their environments and keep them happy and stimulated.

Rabbits

Let's start with our fluffy friends, the rabbits! A truly happy bunny is one that gets to express its natural behaviours. Rabbits love to hop, stretch, and play, so providing them with ample space is key. And since rabbits are social creatures, it's best to keep them in pairs or small groups. Just remember, it's crucial to have them neutered—even same-sex groups can have squabbles if hormones are running high!

Now, what do bunnies love? Well, they're all about climbing, tunnelling, and digging. In the wild, if they sense danger, their instinct is to hop away and hide. To mimic this behaviour, create a cozy little haven for them at home. You can do this by setting up tubes for them to dash through, or providing a cardboard box filled with shredded paper for them to burrow into. A digging pit with some dirt will also make them squeal



with delight!

Did you know that rabbits spend about 70% of their waking hours munching? You can make mealtime exciting by encouraging foraging. Hang root vegetables from a string for them to nibble on or scatter their food around their space to engage their natural instincts. You might even consider placing hay in hanging baskets so they can reach up and munch, just like they would in nature.

And don't forget to provide safe things for them to chew on—apple wood or willow sticks work wonders!

Guinea Pigs

Next up, let's talk about guinea pigs! These curious little critters love to observe their surroundings. Alongside their roomy indoor hutch, they absolutely need an outdoor run where they can graze and explore. Since they can be a bit shy, it's important to have hiding spots available in their run. Cardboard boxes, tubes, or even tunnels will give them a sense of security while adding a dash of fun to their playtime.

While guinea pigs aren't huge fans of traditional toys, you can keep them entertained by hiding small amounts of food around for them to find. This taps into their natural foraging behaviour!

These little guys thrive on companionship too. Make sure they're housed in pairs or small groups of the same sex to keep their spirits high.



Hamsters

Now, let's turn our attention to hamsters! While you're bustling around during the day, your hamster is likely tucked away in a cozy sleep. But when night falls, they're ready to party! These little dynamos need plenty of exercise and love running on their wheels. Just a tip: avoid wheels with spokes since they can injure little paws. Instead, opt for a solid, wide wheel.

You can also keep your hamster engaged by providing cardboard tubes for them to scurry through, and wooden ledges for climbing. And guess what? They absolutely



adore rolling around in a sand bath!
You can find special sand for this at your local pet shop.

Gerbils

Gerbils are the tunnel experts of the small pet world! In the wild, they thrive in burrows, so you'll want to create a digging paradise for them. Use dust-extracted bedding or dried peat moss—make it nice and thick! Cardboard tubes, like empty toilet rolls, are a hit for running and chewing.

Gerbils are naturally curious, so add a flat rock in their habitat for them to use as a lookout spot. They also enjoy climbing on fruit tree branches. To keep them happy and active, offer them a sand bath filled with special sand from pet shops.

Because gerbils are very social, it's important to keep them in pairs or small same-sex groups. They thrive on the company of their buddies!





Rats

Rats are social butterflies! They're happiest when they're on the move, so giving them at least an hour outside their cage every day for exploration is essential. Just make sure the room is rat-proofed first—these little escape artists are skilled at finding their way out!

You might find that some rats enjoy toys, like pieces of plastic drainpipe or cardboard boxes. They may even take a liking to running on a solid, wide wheel, just like hamsters, but remember to avoid those with spokes.

Rats, like many small pets, love to have friends, so keep them in same-sex pairs or small groups for a fulfilling life.

Mice

Mice are all about climbing! They'll be thrilled with lengths of rope hanging in their tank or fruit tree branches to scamper across. Tunnels made from plastic or cardboard are perfect for their curious little minds. You can even let them have supervised digging sessions in a cardboard box filled with compost.

Like gerbils, mice enjoy the company of their own kind, so keeping them in same-sex groups, ideally from the same litter, will keep the peace.



Degus

Degus are bundles of energy! To keep them happy, provide exercise wheels and wooden branches, which serve as a playground, climbing structures, and tasty treats all in one. Safe woods like apple, hazelnut, and hawthorn work well for chewing.

These active little creatures also need a good supply of hay, so consider filling a box with it for some fun foraging. They'll love a digging box filled with organic soil and sand too! Degus enjoy a daily sand bath as well, using special sand from pet shops.

Don't forget that degus thrive in groups, so make sure they have at least one buddy to



socialise with!

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Chinchillas

Finally, we have chinchillas! Like hamsters, these fluffy cuties are nocturnal. While you're busy during the day, they're off in dreamland, but come evening, they're ready to play! It's essential to supervise them during their exercise sessions since they love to explore and nibble on anything they can find—especially electrical wires.

Chinchillas also need a dust bath to keep their coats in tip-top shape. Use special chinchilla dust, and give them around 20 minutes to roll around and have a blast.

They're social creatures too, so having a playmate around will keep them happy and



snuggly.