

How to Introduce/Bond Rabbits

Bonding/Reintroducing

- When you get home make sure to set up the rabbits' x-pens next to each other about 3 inches apart. You don't want the pens any closer or the bunnies might be able to bite and injure one another.
- It's a good idea to slide a piece of wood or another solid object between their cages so they can't push them together.
- Place their food and water dishes on the side of the pen closest to the other bunny's pen. This way, they can see each other and associate food with being close together.
- Before starting playdates, we want to see signs that the bunnies trust each other. When they flop on the floor with their feet splayed out and are at the side of the pen closest to the other, this is a signal they are ready for more contact.



What to do in between playdates?

- You can swap the bunnies so they get used to each other's x-pen environment. Remove the rabbits from their enclosures and switch them: Put Bunny #1 into Bunny #2's enclosure and Bunny #2 into Bunny #1's enclosure. This allows them to get comfortable with each other's scents and using the same sleeping area, litterbox etc. It can also help with territorial issues.
- You can also instead swap all their items between cages, such as their food bowls, litterboxes, toys and hiding places.

Bunny dates:

- Choose a neutral space, such as a hallway, kitchen floor etc. (Space should be large.) It is crucial to pay close attention to both rabbits when placed together. Make sure you have something to separate them, like a pillow, oven mitts, broom, or towel, in case they start fighting.
- Make sure that you have food available during these dates, as it will help with the bonding process. You should sprinkle food directly on the floor and avoid using plates or bowls as this may cause territorial issues.
- When you have them together in their neutral space, it's normal for them to nip, chase and possibly mount, as they are trying to establish who is going to enjoy what during interaction. (Never leave the rabbits alone during their bunny dates.)



- If you find that the more timid rabbit is getting irritated, you can loudly clap your hands or give the mounting bunny a light nudge this will sometimes cause it to stop. (Only do this if you think a fight is going to happen.)
- At first, bunny dates should go about 15 minutes, or shorter if it's not going very well. If the bunny date is going well, it's best to continue the date as long as possible.

Good signs that bonding/bunny dates are going well:

- The rabbits will start to mirror each other, which means they may lie down on opposite sides of the room and groom independently, play alone, or eat alone. This is a good sign!
- Grooming, whether it's grooming each other or independently, is a good sign. Mutual grooming is the single most important indicator of a bonded pair.
- Flopping is when they go from a standing position to suddenly falling onto their sides and stretching their legs out.
- Binkying is when they do a little jump for joy. They will usually run and then jump into the air twisting. This is a sign that they are very happy.
- If they are eating in each other's presence, they are not feeling stressed out.

Signs to watch out for during dates:

- Bunny tornado: This is when rabbits are chasing each other in a tight circle. This should be broken up immediately. Do so carefully as you can get scratched or bitten trying to intervene. Use a broom, tennis racquet or towel to break up the chase.
- Rabbits usually raise their tail and put their ears back when they are uncomfortable with a situation. If the other rabbit does not respect these signals, a fight often ensues. This is why it's important to watch the rabbits' body language.
- When both rabbits face each other and place their heads on the ground, they are asking for grooming from the other rabbit. If neither rabbit starts grooming the other, this can lead to some tension and fighting. In order to prevent this, try petting each of them on the nose. This helps them feel like they are both getting something out of the interaction and can sometimes encourage them to start grooming each other.

