

# Bringing Home Bunny!

When you first bring home your rabbit, please remember that everything in his life has just changed. He has just left behind everything he has known. He learned from his foster that some humans are safe and he will be well taken care of and all of a sudden, his pen, his people, his toys and the smells and noises in this new home are different.

It will take some time for him to get used to and to know that these new humans are his new family and they will keep him safe, and love him for who he is. Don't be surprised if your bun's personality changes after the first week or two. This is simply your rabbit relaxing into his new home, and allowing you to see who he truly is. The first couple weeks are the most important time in building his trust and this sets the tone for the lifelong relationship you will have with your rabbit.



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Rabbits are prey animals and are naturally very cautious. Gaining his trust is really important, and this is started in the first few days he is in your home. Your rabbit will need a "home base" – space that belongs only to him. This will provide a feeling of safety and security to your rabbit and provide a safe place for him to be when you are away from home or sleeping.

To make this a comfortable place for your rabbit you will need to make sure he has enough space. There should be enough room for your bun to lay out fully without touching the sides of their space while all the necessities are in there as well.

Housing your rabbit in an exercise pen (commonly known as an X-pen) can be a big improvement over the idea of a cage. With a cage your rabbit's space can be limited and he can become frustrated at being in a smaller space when you are away or asleep at night. X-pen living gives him more space, while still keeping him safely contained, during those times when you are not at home or need to keep your bun enclosed.



There are a few reasons we suggest X-pen living for your rabbit:

- You're getting more space for your money as X-pens cost the same or less than most rabbit cages and your rabbit will not outgrow the pen.
- Your rabbit has more room to roam and feels "freer" while still in a safe place.
- X-Pens are flexible and can be configured in any shape to suit your available space.
- X-pens are easy to clean and portable.

Choose a spot that gets some regular, not-too-noisy traffic, where he can see, hear and be involved in your day-to-day activities, but not be trampled by your daily routines.



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As exciting as it is for you and your family, it really is best to leave your rabbit to explore his new enclosure and learn the sights and sounds of his new home. There will be lots of time for playing and petting, once he is trusting, calm and secure with you as his new family.



Spend time on the outside of his pen, at his level (think lying / sitting on the floor) and either talk quietly to him or you can just sit there and read a book or do some other quiet activity. He will eventually learn that you are safe and will come over to explore who you are.

Another way to let your rabbit know that you are a friend, is to give him a few treats, feed him his food, give him his hay and water without grabbing at him. Simply offer the back of your hand for him to sniff. He will eventually come to you and sniff your hand. This is a sign that he is learning to be less afraid and getting more curious.

Once he is feeling more secure, you can allow him some supervised running time. If there are spaces that you do not want your rabbit to go when he runs, as he will need to do almost every day, you will have to block these areas off and make sure that you have bunny-proofed the areas he will be allowed in. This can be a really fun time for both you and your rabbit.

Rabbits are curious and will come over to you if you lay on the floor where they are running. They really like it when they can be face-to-face with you and they will sniff at you, may give you a bump with their nose, lick your face or even crawl up on your back. These are all signs that your rabbit is feeling secure in their new home.

In the X-pen, you will need to have:

- One or two litterboxes with rabbit safe litter
  - recycled newspaper litter, "carefresh" litter or high quality wood stove pellets (without glue) are the best bet for your home and your rabbit.
  - Avoid clumping litters, litters made of clay, cedar or pine shavings & corn cob litters as these are unhealthy for your rabbit.
- Hay, either in the litter box or in a hay rack needs to be available at all times.
  - A rabbit's diet needs to be 80-85% hay for him to remain healthy.
- Fresh water in a heavy crock bowl (so it is not easily knocked over) needs to be available at all times.
- Toys to keep your rabbit entertained as well as something safe to chew on such as wicker, or sea-grass baskets and mats, cardboard tubes and boxes, hard plastic baby-toys for tossing, apple or willow branches, and plenty of fresh hay.

