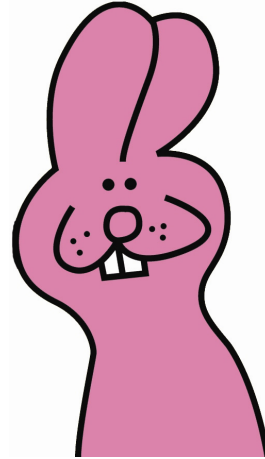


## **How to Houstrain your Bunny**

With the proper training and equipment, rabbits can make excellent indoor pets. Here are some ideas to help, suggested by the House Rabbit Society. Like cats, rabbits can be litter trained. Rabbits will often choose a spot as their very own outhouse. You'll want to place a litter box in your bunny's chosen spot, even if there's more than one. You'll also have to do some litter training to make sure your bunny understands what to do with the box.

Start with a cage, one big enough for your bunny to stretch out and to hold a litter box and food and water bowls. Place a box in the corner of the cage. If your rabbit urinates in a different corner of the cage, keep moving the box to the spot he uses until he gets the idea. Once your bunny is using the box in the cage, place one or more litter boxes in the area you plan to let him run. Open the cage door so he can get out. Don't force him out of his cage, rather wait for him to go out and begin to explore on his own. If he heads to a spot where there's no box, or lifts up his tail and begins to go to the bathroom, cry "no" sharply. Gently herd the bunny back to the litter box in the cage or one of the boxes in the room. Once he uses his box, praise him and give him his favorite treat. As he begins using the box outside the cage a few times, he'll begin to form the habit. And as he becomes more confident, you'll need fewer boxes. It's not unusual for rabbits to spend lots of time in their boxes, and they will nibble on litter.



You'll find that older rabbits are usually easier to train than younger ones. A rabbit's attention span and knack for learning increases as it grows. Like other pets, spaying and neutering cuts down on the inclination to spray or mark a territory, and makes litter training easier.

Cleaning litter boxes often will help encourage your rabbit to use them. Use white vinegar to rinse boxes out. For tough stains, let pans soak. Accidents outside of the cage can be cleaned up with white vinegar or club soda. If the urine has already dried, try products that remove pet stain and odor.

Chewing and digging are other bunny habits that can be managed. Start by bunny-proofing the area where your bunny runs by covering the electrical and phone cords and removing poisonous plants. You'll also need to supply plenty of toys that satisfy the digging and chewing urge.

Rabbits need things to climb on, crawl under, hop on and around, dig into and chew on. Without such outlets, your bunny may create jumping, chewing or crawling diversions with your furniture.

Your rabbit will tell you what his toy needs are. Does he like to hide in the stuffing under the recliner? Does he like to climb on the desk and poke around the printer? Does he dig furiously? Does he run up and down the stairs? Does he race to a certain spot and continue the redecorating job he left yesterday? All of these behaviors call for different toys.

Indoor playground equipment can satisfy the climbing and hopping urge, and cardboard boxes open at both ends make excellent rabbit tunnels. Diggers might like newspapers stuffed in one end of the tunnel, or enjoy boxes filled with newspaper or hay. A carpet scrap or grass mat can also satisfy the digging urge.

Rabbits who like to shred will need a lot of paper, such as an old phone book. Those that enjoy throwing will have a good time with small balls or baby toys. (Some can even be taught to play a toss game with their owners.)

Satisfying the chewing urge requires more than a chew stick. Bunny owners may need to supply untreated wicker baskets, logs, sticks, paper, straw and cardboard. Fill a cardboard box with paper or straw and tear a small hole for a starter, your rabbit can finish the chewing job.

Be creative and imaginative when caring for your bunny. In return, you'll have a creative and imaginative companion.