



Guide to Hamster Cages

You should provide your hamster with the largest home possible. In the wild, a hamster burrow has many rooms and can be several feet underground. The domesticated hamster similarly prefers large spaces. If the cage is too small, your hamster may become bored, protective, and nippy.

Of the dozens of hamster cages sold at pet stores and online, many are not suitable for hamsters. A cage may be too small, unsafe, or impractical. This guide will help you navigate the choices and pick the cage that is best for you and your hammy. Prices, availability, and details are always subject to change and may vary depending on where you live.

Recommended Cages for Syrian or Dwarf Hamsters

All Living Things 24" Small Animal Home. Roomy one-level wire cage.

Advantages: Roomy; space for multiple nesting houses and wheels with room still for burrowing. Easy to clean. Be sure you are not buying the 36" version for guinea pigs, which has bars far enough apart for a hammy to fit through, or the 16" version, which is too small.

Disadvantages: No wheel; could be hard to find.

Modifications: Add a solid wheel such as a Silent Spinner 9-inch wheel for Syrian hamsters and a smaller Silent Spinner Wheel solid wheel for dwarf hamsters.

Available from: Petstores or online

My First Home for Rats. Wire cage with solid second level.

Advantages: This is marketed for rats, but it's actually a much better size for hamsters. It's easy to clean and transport and will give your hammy plenty of room to roam. The second level is even solid.

Disadvantages: No wheel.

Modifications: Add a solid, 9-inch wheel for Syrian hamsters and a smaller solid wheel for dwarf hamsters; such as a Silent Spinner

Available From: Petsmart www.petsmart.com, or Petco, <http://www.petco.com/>



Prevue Hendryx Rat Cage. Very roomy one-level wire cage.

Advantages: Roomy; space for multiple nesting houses and wheels with room still for burrowing. Easy to clean. For those for whom money is not a consideration, this is an excellent choice.

Disadvantages: Pricey; no wheel; could be hard to find.

Modifications: Add a solid, 9-inch wheel for Syrian hamsters and a smaller solid wheel for dwarf hamsters; such as a Silent Spinner.

Available from: <http://www.petstreetmall.com/>

Lixit Hamster Heaven Cage (found on Amazon.com)

Single Unit Midwest Critter Nation (found on Amazon, Dr Foster & Smith, Petco.com, 1800PetSupplies and other online sites.

An aquarium tank should be at least **30 gallons**, with no sharp edges at the corners or cracked sides and a well-fitting top with no gaps or holes. The lid should be secure and well-ventilated, with a wire mesh top instead of air holes, which do not provide enough air for your hamster to breathe normally. The aquarium's advantages are that it minimizes odors and retains bedding and food. It will also your hamster safe and confined, as long as the top is secure. The disadvantage is that there can be a lack of ventilation, and it must be cleaned often so that odors do not build up in the cage. Aquariums are bulky and can be heavy. **Do not use an aquarium smaller than 30 gallons.**

Recommended for Dwarf Hamsters Only

Marchioro Happy-Lux 2 or 3*. This is a roomy, two or three-level wire cage with solid platforms.

Advantages: Roomy; solid floors; easy to clean; nice for multiple dwarf hamsters, with space for multiple wheels and nesting houses.

Disadvantages: Can be difficult to find at pet stores.

Modifications: Replace wheel with several Silent Spinners.

Available from: <http://www.petstore.com/> *Other good Marchioro cages available online: Jack 62 or 72 Hamster Resort Cage; Jill 42.2 Hamster Resort



Make Your Own Cage

With a little elbow grease, you can make a homemade hamster cage that is cheaper and much bigger than anything you can find in a pet store! Things you'll need:

- large plastic bin
- electric drill with drill bits
- small hacksaw
- all-purpose snips
- hardware cloth
- ruler
- marker
- 1/4 - 20 x 1/2 machine screws with nuts and washers (about 20 of each)
- Phillips screwdriver

1. Select an appropriate sized bin for your hamster cage. 105-110 quart works best, just no smaller than 105 quarts.
2. On the bottom side of the lid, mark the area you will cut out for the vent with a marker. Be sure to leave some space on each side for the hardware cloth.
3. Using the hand drill, drill two holes very close together so that they overlap. Do this at each corner. This will be the hole where the hacksaw will go through.
4. Using a small hacksaw, cut along the lines you drew to cut out the piece of plastic from the lid.
5. Take the hardware cloth and place it over the hole you just cut out of the lid to see how much cloth you will need.
6. Using snips, cut out the amount of hardware cloth needed.
7. Now cut off any pieces that are sticking out of the hardware cloth.
8. Place the hardware cloth over the hole and mark where you will need drill for the machine screws. Do this along the entire edge every few inches. Make sure you keep the hardware cloth in place to get accurate drilling spots.
9. Drill out holes where you marked in step (Tip: If you are unsure as to which size drill bit to use, test them out on the piece of plastic you cut out from the lid.)
10. Place a washer and machine screw on the bottom and secure it with a nut on the opposite side. Do this on four opposite sides to secure the hardware cloth. Then screw in the remaining holes. Use a screwdriver if needed to fasten the bolts tight.
11. Add accessories such as water bottles (a wall-mounted bottle with release latch is recommended; simply drill holes in the side of the bin for mounting).
12. Clean your hamster cage bin out. Make sure you remove any plastic shavings and fragments.

For additional photos, visit <http://thehamsterplace.com/how-to-make-a-bin-cage/>



Cages We Do NOT Recommend

Among the cages that are **not suitable for hamsters** are the following:

Most **one-level cages** are just too small. This includes the **All Living Things one-level cage**, **All Living Things Deluxe 16" Starter Kit**, and **My First Home**.

All versions of **S.A.M.** cages are not recommended (a few examples are the Blue Knight Castle, Palace and Clubhouse kits, and Down Under Outback). The reason is that they are almost entirely solid plastic, allowing little ventilation. Some also contain wire floors, and though they may have tubes and towers, they actually provide very little floor space. They also have small wheels. Save your money for a better cage.

Critter Trail cages are very popular and come in one, two, and three-level versions. But the cage is made of cheap plastic parts that don't fit together very well. It can be difficult to assemble and to put back together after cleaning. If any part is not snapped in tight, the hamster can find the loose part and get out. The Petting Zone door must be snapped shut every time, or the hamster will be able to push it open. The Petting Zone area itself is poorly ventilated and can become filthy and smelly over time. The water bottle is of poor quality. The wheel is too small for Syrian hamsters. Finally, the door can become loose over time, so the hamster can easily push it open.

All Living Things three-level cage contains wire floors that must be covered with solid materials to protect hamsters' feet. The wheel is too small for Syrians. Save your money for a better cage.

Coast Cages Del Mar Hamster/Rat cage has wire floors that must be covered with solid materials to protect hamsters' feet. The wheel is attached to the side of the cage and does not come off for cleaning. There are no doors on the bottom level, so if your hammy is on that level and you want to get him or her out, you have to lift off the whole top. Save your money for a better cage.

What about wheels? Wheels should be made from one solid piece and should not have spaces between rungs as this can cause injuries (the hamster's legs can fall through the rungs and break). Wheels for Syrian hamsters should be at least 9 inches in diameter. We recommend the Wodent Wheel or the large Comfort Wheel for either Syrians or dwarves (both widely available online) We recommend the 6.5-inch Silent Spinner for dwarf hammies and 9" for Syrians; available at PetSmart).

Questions? E-mail hamsters@smallangelsrescue.org.

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