

Hamster Facts

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



- Hamsters have short tails, less than 1/2" long.
- They are mostly nocturnal, or active at night.
- Wild hamsters dig large tunnel systems for homes.
- Their teeth grow continually throughout life.
- Hamster's have four toes on their front feet and five toes on the hind feet.

Hamsters are small, active rodents. There are many different varieties of hamsters. The most common pet hamster is the "Golden" or "Syrian" hamster. They are named after Syria, which is the country where they were first found. Other popular pet hamsters are classified as dwarf hamsters. Both species can be a great pet. However, golden hamsters must be kept singly - they will not tolerate the company of another hamster once they reach 10 weeks of age. Contrastingly, dwarf hamsters are more social with their own species. They sometimes live in pairs or very small groups. Regardless of which species you choose as a pet, both golden and dwarf hamsters have similar care. They need a safe and secure [home](#) with plenty of exercise opportunities. Their simple diet should consist of a quality [hamster food](#).

What Is It Called?		Hamsters Around the World	
Common Name	Technical Name	Language	Name for Hamster
Male	Buck	Italian	criceto
Female	Doe	Polish	chomik
Baby	Pup	Spanish	hamster
Group	Horde	French	hamster

The Most Common Question About Hamsters

What type of home should my hamster have?

There are a variety of hamster habitats available for your pet. All cage styles have advantages and disadvantages. But the cage you choose should be both safe and secure. Hamsters are small, active, and fast. They define what it means to be an "escape artist." If they escape from their homes, they can be exposed to a variety of common household dangers. The home you choose for your hamster should be safe. Hamsters have very sensitive feet; therefore, do not choose a cage with a wire floor.

Traditionally, people have kept their pets in a small aquarium with a screen mesh cover. These types of homes are very secure, as long as the screen cover is firmly positioned. But all-glass homes are not well-ventilated and typically boring for your pet. Wire cages have the advantage of allowing the hamster to use the wire itself for climbing exercise. They are also fairly well ventilated. If you choose this style of cage, ensure the horizontal bars are spaced only 1/2 to 3/4 inches apart. Ideally, this style of cage should also have a base that easily detaches from the remainder of the cage for simpler cleaning. Regardless of what style of home you choose, your hamster also needs a variety of sleep and play areas. A nest box, exercise wheel, tunnels, and appropriate chew toys can help keep your hamster active and healthy.