# Leash Train Your Rabbit, How to

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*

Many small pet owners long to give their rabbit the excitement the outside brings to feed their playful curiosity, but know the risks of an unsupervised furry friend. The sight, movements, sounds, and smells are all too enticing to rabbits. If your rabbit enjoys the outdoors and you want to find a compromise, try to train him to accept a harness and a lead - ideally at a young age. Here's how:



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## Training Steps:

Select a lightweight body harness with a band that goes around your rabbit's neck and a band that goes around your rabbit's chest/torso. Never use a collar, since a rabbit can easily slip out of one or become injured. Also select a lightweight leash.

Hold your rabbit firmly, but gently, and kneel on the floor beside him.

Speak gently and soothingly to your rabbit as you slowly ease the harness onto him. Offer your rabbit treats while he is getting used to the harness to make the experience positive and rewarding.

If your rabbit is reluctant about wearing the harness, try again slowly later in the day or the next day. Do this until your rabbit is used to wearing the harness indoors.

Once he is used to wearing a harness, attach the leash and let him drag it along behind him until he/she gets used to the feel of a pull on the harness.

Walk inside for a number of days before venturing outside. If your rabbit has never been outside - get him used to it by putting his cage outside in a pet-safe area (in the shade).

Once your rabbit is at ease with the feel of the harness and leash, take hold of the loop end. Give your pet a little walk in the house to judge his response. Pick a quiet time of day for your first journey so he doesn't get overwhelmed or frightened his first day out.

To coax your rabbit to walk along with you, offer him special treats.

Remember that even the most confident bunny may panic if suddenly aware of open space, the constraint of the harness, and the approach of an unknown animal. With this in mind, it is best



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to stay within familiar areas when walking your rabbit.

If your pet doesn't take very well to walking on a lead, but enjoys the outdoors, there's a good selection of outdoor playpens that provide room to frolic.

We have heard many stories of owners whose rabbits hop along with them when they go for a stroll. Using a leash with a harness makes this safe, enjoyable exercise.



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