

# Gerbil Glossary of Terms

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



## Bedding

This is the wood shavings or other kind of [bedding](#) that is in the bottom of your gerbil's cage. Gerbils need to dig and burrow, so put at least two to three inches of bedding in the cage. You can use [Aspen](#) wood bedding, [wood fiber bedding](#), or another safe bedding alternative. Never use pine or cedar bedding, since that can be dangerous for your gerbil.



## Cage

A cage is where your gerbil lives. The best cages are aquariums or cages with a deep base to keep all the bedding inside. [Plastic cages](#) are fun for your gerbil, but they don't last as long since gerbils love to chew on everything.

## Chew toys

Like other rodents, gerbils have teeth that keep growing. [Chew toys](#) are generally made from wood, and they give your gerbil a safe toy to gnaw and chew on to wear down his teeth.



## Daily Diet

A daily diet is what your gerbil needs to eat every day. Your gerbil should get a [high quality pellet diet](#) and lots of fresh water every day.

## Dust bath

Believe it or not, some animals take a bath in dust! While that wouldn't help you get very clean, it keeps your gerbil smelling good and his fur feeling soft. To give your gerbil a dust bath, take a [ceramic dish](#) or hideout, and fill the bottom with [chinchilla dust](#). Then put it in his cage, and watch him roll around and kick the dust everywhere! In addition to keeping him clean, this is also an entertaining toy for him. Gerbils should take dust baths once every couple weeks.



## Exercise wheel

An [exercise wheel](#) is a large wheel that you put in your gerbil's cage to allow him to run and get the exercise he needs. The wheel can be on a stand or mounted on the cage. Make sure you choose a wheel with a solid surface, such as the [Silent Spinner](#), so your gerbil doesn't accidentally catch his tail or a foot in it.

## Food dish

Gerbils eat their food out of a dish. Because gerbils like to chew, heavy, ceramic dishes are best. Avoid using plastic dishes so your gerbil won't chew on them, and use heavy dishes so your gerbil can't easily tip them over and spill his food everywhere.



## Nest box

A nest box is an enclosed space that your gerbil will use for sleeping, playing, and hiding. It is a place where he feels secure and safe. Your gerbil's nest box should be wood or ceramic. Avoid a plastic nest box, since he will probably try to chew on it.

## Nesting material

[Nesting material](#) is soft bedding that your gerbil can pull apart and move



to make himself a nest in his nest box. He will sleep, burrow, and play in it.

### Nocturnal

A nocturnal animal is an animal that sleeps most of the day and is most active at night. While gerbils are nocturnal animals, they actually are awake at several times during the day and night.

### Run-about ball

A [run-about ball](#) is a hollow, plastic ball that you can put your gerbil in when he's out of his cage. It lets him get exercise but keeps him safe and contained so he doesn't hurt himself or escape.

### Tame

A tame animal is one that you can hold and play with. You can tame your gerbil by giving him treats, talking to him softly, and allowing him to climb into your hand on his own. Once he will climb into your hand, it is safe to pick him up.

### Thumping

"Thumping" is something a gerbil does when he's excited or upset about something. When a gerbil thumps, he pounds both of his hind legs on the ground. If you have more than one gerbil, they will all thump if one gerbil does. Young gerbils will thump even if they aren't excited or stressed.

### Toys

Your gerbil's [toys](#) keep him from getting bored and provide necessary exercise. Gerbils like toys that they can chew and climb on. Good gerbil toys include [wooden chew toys](#), cardboard boxes, [tunnels](#), hay, branches, pieces of wood, rocks, ladders, ramps, and platforms. Don't give your gerbil plastic toys.

### Water bottle

Your gerbil will drink his water from a water bottle. Choose a [water bottle](#) that has a glass bottle and a metal tube to drink from so he can't chew on it.