

## Tom's Gerbils - Gerbil Care

### Food

A) This American Gerbil Society judge's website has an excellent review of the best commercial brand foods:

[http://moonstonegerbils.com/index\\_files/commercial.html](http://moonstonegerbils.com/index_files/commercial.html)

B) Homemade Food.

I think the best plan is offer a mix of food for gerbils based on nutritional requirements and tips from other breeders. Here is the main diet I am feeding my gerbils now:

### Gerbil Diet Recipe

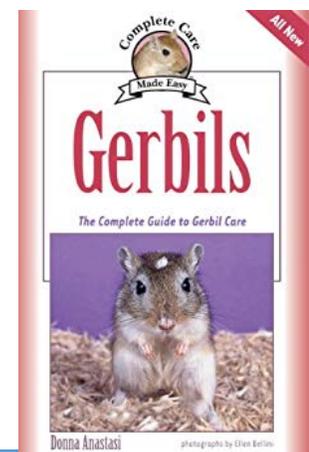
- Kaytee Wild Bird Seed, Fruit and Nut.
- Sunflower Hearts.
- Wild finch food.
- Cheerios (store brand).
- Bran Flakes with no raisins.
- Granola/Cereal.
- Puffed Wheat.
- Split Peas.
- Barley.
- Oatmeal.
- Whole, raw peanuts.
- Nuts and seeds - pumpkin seeds, pecan, walnut, pine nuts.
- Freeze-dried mealworms (extra protein for nursing gerbils and growing babies).
- Dried Fruit - raisins, banana chips, cherries.
- Lentils.



Check out these sources for more specific mixture ideas, nutrition, and foods to avoid, and detailed care information:

[Shawsheen River Gerbils](#) and [Gerbils: The Complete Guide to Gerbil Care by Donna Anastasi](#), and [ABC Gerbils](#).

You can also provide them standard gerbil food seed. Keep in mind this diet alone may not allow gerbils to reach the weight they need to win shows. Some people with Champion gerbils also feed a higher protein diet and include a variety of nuts and seeds in addition to occasional mealworms. An interesting variety of foods and treats will enrich their



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lives and certainly boost their health. We often shop at Whole Foods and buy them interesting items in the bulk food section (seeds, grains, etc.) and let them try each item. Gerbils will each have their unique tastes, and it is fascinating to learn what each likes or does not care for. Check their food dish to see what they take first or leave behind and you will understand their preferences.

**Water:** Make sure to check their water bottle every day or two for both adequate supply, and to avoid bedding piling up which may cause the water to wick and leak out.

## Bedding



I really like aspen shavings because it does not cause respiratory issues for small animals. This is very important. Gerbils can have a bad reaction to certain bedding (especially the manufactured beddings with baking soda!) resulting in irritated and bleeding noses. Unfortunately, they don't know any better, and will usually make their condition much worse by scratching the affected area to the point of infection. If so, return them immediately to safe, plain bedding. A tiny, tiny dab of Neosporin on your finger can be applied to an affected nose. If you do try a new bedding, monitor them carefully for the first hours and days to confirm they do not suffer any reaction.

You can get this through your local pet supply or online; [Nepco Laboratory Bedding](#).

## Housing

Although two gerbils can be kept comfortably in a standard 10 gallon glass aquarium, I prefer to give gerbils enough room to play and enjoy their home with opportunity for them to have their own little spaces. Glass tanks are best for safety, neatness, cleaning, noise, and viewing your gerbils.

I like the 40 gallon [Zilla Critter Cage](#) tank (36" L x 18" w). It comes with a sliding screen lid that can also be locked if needed. It is the best value for size, space, and safety. They come in many sizes. The extra security of the sliding lid is especially important if



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there is EVER the possibility of other animals present in the home or coming into contact with the gerbil's home. Please never forget that your gerbils depend on you completely to protect them at all times from other animals. Most other types of household pets have a natural instinct to "hunt" little rodents, and it only takes a few moments for a situation to turn deadly for your gerbils.



There are several concerns with plastic cages, including gerbils finding an edge to start gnawing on and creating an escape route or a dangerous sharp edge!

### **Socializing**

Generally, gerbils should be kept in small groups. Two or three females are a good size group or multiple males can be together (depending on the size of the cage).

Young gerbils are the easiest to introduce. It is always recommended to use the Split Cage method to introduce gerbils. You can Google "split cage gerbils" for more information or email me directly. Here is the order of "Easiest New Gerbil Introductions" when introducing gerbils from different litters:

Pups > 2 young males > male and female young breeding pair > 2 young females > adult male to youngster > mature male and female breeding pair > adult males > female adult to youngster > adult females (challenging, but very possible depending on temperament-- know your gerbils first!). Lastly, introducing two or more gerbils at the same time can be most difficult, especially



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among females. When introducing blue gerbils to non-blue gerbils, interactions and aggressive behavior can be expected and difficult.

It is good to know their personalities first before putting them in a split cage. And also you have to allow them time to do "Walk by's" in neutral territories. You have to constantly reassess to make sure they are progressing well or if they will need more time in a split cage. Patience and reassessment are the best ways to avoid gerbil fights.

### Play Time

My gerbils LOVE to run around my room on the floor, play, and explore. In order to get the full experience and joy that comes with being a gerbil owner, I highly recommend you give your gerbils time to run around and play. They will be a lot happier, healthier, and more interactive with people if you provide time on the floor or in a safe GERBIL PROOF play space.



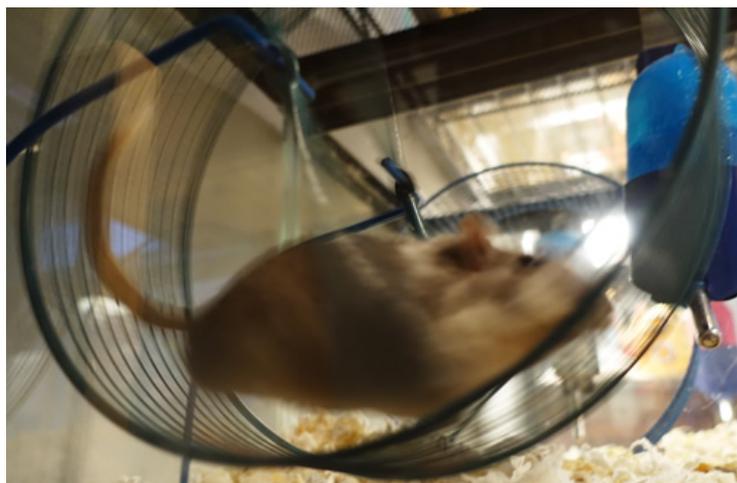
They like to sit on my shoulder, or run on my bed while I am reading, doing work, or relaxing. They enjoy activity and love to socialize with their owners and their guests. A well raised gerbil is active, curious, and completely trusting with people.

Be sure your play space is reviewed for security and safety. No accessible air vents, electrical cords to chew, or spaces that they can get stuck in beyond your rescue. Some of them like to annoy and flirt with my other gerbils in the room! They are really funny and entertaining. Their unique personalities will certainly be shown, some are adventurous, some are curious, and I have a few that prefer to stay closer to me on the floor after pretending to be brave.

### Exercising and Fun

Gerbils LOVE wheels! A good plastic wheel will give them miles of running space. Just keep it clean with a soap rinse every day or two so they and their home stay cleaner.

Cardboard. The ultimate always fun for gerbils toy! Toilet tissue rolls, paper towel rolls, food boxes of every size and shape all provide endless excitement for our little



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friends. Try them in various combinations to create tunnels, little houses, bunkers, and lean-to style shelters. Gerbils love new adventures and little projects to keep them busy and interested. Just beware of any items that are best left out of their tanks like plastic, metal staples, waxy materials, or choking hazards.

### AGS – American Gerbil Society

The [American Gerbil Society](#) (AGS) is a non-profit organization providing support and education to breeders, caregivers, and enthusiasts for the ethical and humane treatment of gerbils and other rodents.



- Discover the world of gerbils and learn how to care for and enrich their lives.
- Locate a responsible gerbil breeder near you, including any rescue opportunities.
- Become a member and enjoy exclusive benefits and premium online content.
- Enter fun and competitive activities in gerbil exhibition. Make friends and win ribbons!



Wishing you and your pets the best,

- Tom