



5 Steps to Free Roam a Pet Rabbit in Your Home



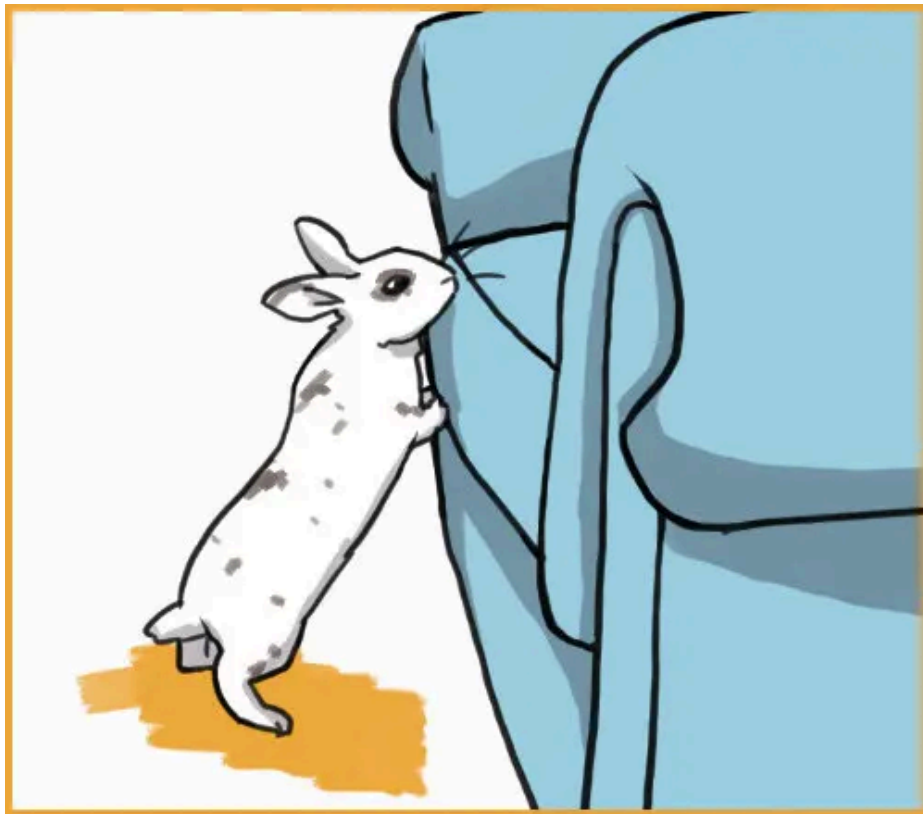
Rabbits are amazing pets that can be great companions if we let them. They can race around our homes and spend time with us as they show their unique personalities. Letting your rabbit roam free in your home is an excellent way to make them a part of your family and an integral part of your life.

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What is a free roam rabbit?

A rabbit is considered to be free roam, or free range, when they have constant access to the house or apartment, even when their caretakers are away or sleeping. The pet rabbit is treated similar to the way we treat pet cats and dogs. They are allowed to roam around the house and rarely, if ever, kept in an enclosure.

Much of the time when people have a free roam rabbit, they'll give the rabbit unlimited access to all areas of the house or apartment. However, sometimes rooms or areas will be blocked off to the rabbit that are dangerous to a curious bunny. Other people choose to set up a rabbit room, and allow their rabbits free roam of that one room, but not of the entire home.



A free roam rabbit is not closed in an enclosure even when the caretaker is away and cannot directly supervise them.

Should you free roam your rabbit?

Ideally, everyone would be able to free roam their rabbit, however it's not always practical. Rabbits can be little troublemakers. They'll find ways of getting into places they shouldn't. They'll chew on dangerous objects or dig into the floor and damage it. Some rabbits just need a lot of supervision so that they don't get themselves into a dangerous situation or destroy your home.

Of course, this doesn't mean you should give up and keep your rabbit in a cage all day. Even if you cannot allow your rabbit to have unlimited time outside of their enclosure, it's still best to allow them as much time to roam your home as possible. You'll still want to do everything you can to rabbit proof your home. This ensures that your rabbit can spend time with you and the family as safely as possible. You just might have to keep them in their enclosure when you can't watch over them, like when you are sleeping or away from home.

If you can't free-roam your companion, you'll also want to be extra sure that their enclosure is a suitable environment for rabbits. This means [making sure the enclosure is large enough](#) for your rabbit. You'll also need to give them fun toys and hiding houses for your rabbit to play in. **A happy bunny needs an enclosure that is *at least* 3-4 times the full length of your rabbit** (but bigger is better).

1. Rabbit proofing

When free roaming your rabbit, the most important step you need to take is [thoroughly rabbit proofing your entire home](#). This means taking precautions to keep your rabbit safe. Get dangerous objects out of your rabbit's reach and cover up areas where your rabbit is likely to be destructive. This is important whether you intend to allow your rabbit to free roam or not, but you'll need to be very careful if you intend to let your rabbit out without supervision.

Over the first few weeks that you bring your rabbit home, you'll need to watch them closely to see what kind of behaviors they have. You can watch them to see what small holes they manage to get into or what their destructive habits are. This way you can find ways to protect your belongings and keep your rabbit safe.

Wires

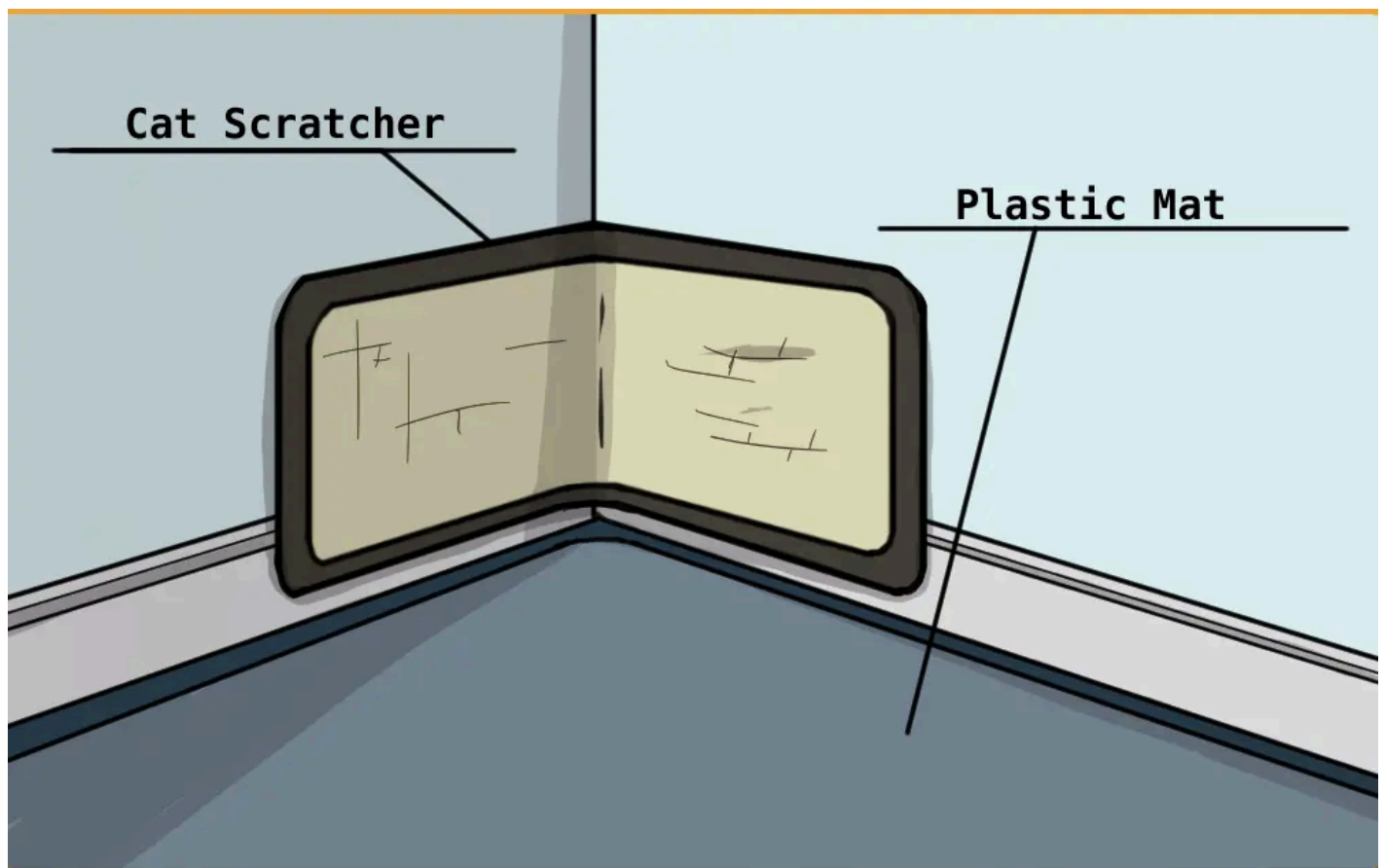
Wires are usually the most dangerous household objects that you need to keep out of your rabbit's reach. A small bunny biting into a wire could not only cut off power supply to an important appliance, but they can also be electrocuted or burned. So you need to do what you can to keep wires out of reach of your rabbit.

The first thing to do is completely block off areas that have a lot of wires. [Put fencing around desks with computer wires](#) or keep your rabbit from getting at the wires around televisions. If you cannot get a wire completely out of a rabbit's reach, you can use [plastic wire tubing](#) to cover your wires and keep them safe.

Carpets

Many rabbits, especially females, are diggers. They will obsessively dig into the corners of rooms and seriously damage the carpets. They may also try to eat or chew pieces of the carpet, which could be bad for their digestion.

You'll want to cover the corners of rooms or hot-spot digging areas with [plastic mats](#) or [natural fiber areas rugs](#) (like seagrass rugs) to prevent your rabbit from destroying the carpet and make sure they won't get sick from the carpet fibers. You should also give your rabbit safe places for them to dig into. You can [make a simple digging box](#) for your rabbit or even get [cat scratcher mats](#) for your rabbit to have fun with.



Rabbits prefer to dig and chew at corners. Use a flexible cat scratcher to cover the baseboards and a plastic mat to cover the rugs.

Baseboards

Rabbits are also known to chew on baseboards. They have the instinctual desire to chew on things. Baseboards are right at their mouth level, so they are often damaged. This can also be dangerous to rabbits because the paint may contain toxic elements that should not be ingested, especially in old houses that still have lead paint on the walls.

Some things you can do to keep your rabbit from chewing on the baseboards include:

- Hanging [cat scratcher mats](#) in corners
- Covering the baseboards with wooden planks or flattened cardboard boxes
- Placing furniture to block access to baseboards
- Setting up fencing around the perimeter of the room. (*Tip: use [these DIY cube organizers](#) and [zip-tie](#) them together along the sides of the room*)
- Spraying [bitter apple spray](#) along the baseboards

Protecting furniture

Rabbits might also try to chew on or dig into pieces of furniture. They might dig into your couch cushions causing fluff to fly, or they can chew on the legs of any wooden pieces of furniture you have. You can protect the wooden legs of your furniture by wrapping them in flexible cat scratcher mats. To protect your couch, there are a couple things you can try:

- **Place [cube fencing](#) on top of the couch when you are not using it.** You can connect a few flat panels of the cubes together and place it on top of the couch when you're not sitting on it. This will discourage your rabbit from jumping up on the couch because of the uncomfortable footing.
- **Covering the couch with an old blanket when you're not using it.** If you have an old blanket that you don't care if it gets destroyed, you can use it to cover the couch and prevent your rabbit from digging into the more expensive cushions.



Stop your rabbit from nesting under the furniture by setting up gates.

Blocking areas off

You'll also want to block off access to areas that cannot be fully rabbit proofed. This includes keeping rabbits from getting into closets and blocking off rooms in the house that are not safe for rabbits. You can also block off the areas underneath couches and beds to prevent rabbits from trying to dig into the carpet underneath these areas.

To block off an entire room, the easiest tool to use is a [doggy gate](#). You can also put these on closet entrances to keep a rabbit from sneaking inside. For blocking of areas underneath furniture, you can use those DIY storage cubes again. Make sure to zip tie or attach them securely, so your rabbit doesn't manage to find a way around the fencing.

Keep dangerous objects out of reach

The other thing to keep in mind is to make sure you keep dangerous objects out of your rabbit's reach. This means never leaving human food lying around, and keeping any houseplants on high surfaces, away from your rabbit. You'll also want to keep any electrical appliances, like fans and heaters, behind fencing or out of reach from the rabbit.



Tip: Moving the hay near the box can encourage your rabbit to use the litter box more.

2. Litter train your rabbit

If you want to free roam your rabbit, you are going to need to litter train them. [Rabbit pee](#) has a high concentration of ammonia. It can strip wood of its varnish and seriously damage rugs and carpets if it's not cleaned right away. Rabbits also poop a lot! It's not a very disgusting kind of poop, but if your rabbit isn't litter trained, you will find it all over the house.

Rabbits are generally clean to begin with, so it's *usually* not all that difficult to litter train a rabbit:

1. **Start by keeping your rabbit in their enclosure.** They will usually pick one corner to use as their bathroom. Place a litter box in that corner, and scoop some of their poop and urine into the box. Clean up any messes that don't make it into the box as soon as possible.
2. **Give your rabbit some time out to exercise.** Place a number of extra litter boxes in likely places for your rabbit to use. If your rabbit pees, immediately clean up the mess and place one of the boxes where your rabbit went.
3. **Start to remove extra litter boxes.** If your rabbit is getting the hang of it, start taking away the extra litter boxes one by one so your rabbit will go back to the enclosure to use the bathroom.

For a more detailed explanation of how to litter train your rabbit, along with some tips for stubborn rabbits, [check out my step-by-step guide](#).

3. Toys for rabbits

Rabbits who are entertained will be less likely to be destructive. They'll be less likely to dig and chew on things they shouldn't, and they'll be more content to stay in areas of the house that are safe (rather than trying to shove gates aside and get into rooms that are off limits).

To keep your rabbit happy, you'll need to offer them a wide variety of toys to play with. This includes natural toys, like pinecones, willow balls, and hay twists. It also includes wooden chew toys, and puzzle toys for your rabbit. You can also make your own [DIY toys](#), or use cardboard boxes to make fun places for your rabbit to hide and dig into.

If you're trying to figure out which toys your rabbit likes best, I recommend getting [a sampling of toys from Small Pet Select](#). This is my go-to online store for getting toys that my rabbit actually likes to play with. You can get a bunch of different toys to give to your rabbit, so you can figure out what their favorites are. *(if you use the code **BUNNYLADY**, you can get 15% off your first purchase)*

4. Have a home base for your rabbit

A home base should be a safe and comfortable place for your rabbit to retreat to. Even if you are free roaming your rabbit, you should still set aside an area to be the rabbit's home. Ideally this will be a large enclosure ([such as an ex-pen](#)) that's set up with everything a rabbit needs, including their litter box, food bowls, and comfortable hiding places. But it's never closed off, so your rabbit can come and go as they please.

Set up the home base in an area of the house that is quiet, but not too far away from people. You want your rabbit to feel like they're part of the family, able to watch people come and go. But you don't want to stress them out by putting it in the middle of the living room. The corner of a room, or even a bedroom can be good places to set up a rabbit enclosure for their home base.



Spend time with your rabbit and they will become a part of your family. Just like a cat or a dog!

5. Giving a new rabbit time to adjust

If you're just bringing a new rabbit home, you'll want to give them some time before you allow them to roam free all the time. This will give your rabbit time to get used to the new environment. It will also give you the time to watch your rabbit's habits and prepare your home for your bunny's personality.

Rabbits that all of a sudden find themselves in a new place will always take time to adjust. It's best to help them with this process by opening up space to them a little bit at a time so they can get used to the new territory. A rabbit that is brought home and has access to an entire house immediately can often be so overwhelmed that they hide and refuse to explore at all. But if they are introduced to a little bit of space at a time, they'll be more confident and they'll explore the place little by little until they are a free roam bunny.

This also gives you the chance to watch for any quirks in your rabbit's personality. You'll be able to see what their digging and chewing tendencies are, so you can safely rabbit proof the rest of the home. You can see how high up they jump, so you know how to get dangerous objects out of reach. Taking the time to supervise your rabbit during their first weeks at home can help you prepare for when your rabbit has full access to the house.



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Amy Pratt is a lifelong rabbit owner who has been specializing with rabbits at the Humane Rescue Alliance. She helps to socialize the rabbits and educate volunteers on the care and behavior of these small mammals.

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