



Bonding Rabbits

Bonding rabbits with each other can be a long and difficult process, but it can be very rewarding once you've gone through it. There is a lot of differing information out on the internet, and not all of it is good. There are many sites that suggest you "Trauma Bond" your rabbits by putting them in the same carrier and driving them around so they are scared and rely on each other. **We DO NOT recommend trauma or stress bonding** as a good way to bond any animals, and always recommend fear free alternatives.

Rabbits are naturally very territorial and have distinct hierarchies within groups of rabbits that can change, so no matter what they are going to need to figure that out for a while when they first meet.

Here is a [recommended video to watch](#) with a suggested process for bonding including behaviors to look out for that a fight might break out. She does talk about stress bonding, which we do not recommend, but the rest of the info is great..

Here is [another video](#) where someone talks through the process she did and lessons learned..

What to think about before bonding?

- **Consider the temperament of your rabbit you already have**
Do they get territorial over certain locations? You want to set your rabbits up for success, so by thinking about what could instigate a fight ahead of time and trying to avoid it, you can help the bonding process
- **Think about the setup and space you'll need**
Each rabbit will need to be kept separate for some time. Do you have space to set up a second enclosure that can keep them separated as needed? You might need to start in completely different rooms so they can't see each other, then move the enclosures closer together throughout. You will also need a neutral zone that neither rabbit has been in yet or has been cleaned of their scent so they can meet in neutral territory. Make a plan to set our buns up for success!
- **Spay/Neuter your rabbits**
Often a male/female bond happens faster than trying to bond those of the same gender. However, as the expression implies, rabbits can mate and have babies quickly. So if you are thinking of pairing different genders, ensure they are spayed and neutered first. Even if you are putting rabbits together of the same gender, having them spayed/neutered also helps alleviate some of the hormones and testosterone between them making the bonding process easier.
- **Think about the timing of the process and be patient**
Many people adopt a new rabbit and immediately put them together and wonder why they aren't getting along then bring them back to the shelter. Bonding is not an immediate process, and can take weeks until they are comfortable together. Mentally prepare yourself for this to be a long process, that may not always be linear. Sometimes they are doing great, and something sets them back for a bit, but you can get there!

Tips for Successfully Bonding Rabbits ([List from Rabbit Awareness Action Group](#))

- Put your rabbits' housing near each other. Make sure they can see each other but give them plenty of hiding places in their housing so they can leave if they want to.
- Swap their scents over. Place a small amount of hay or a cloth with their scent on in each other's housing to help them get used to each other's smell.
- Once they're used to seeing and smelling each other, put them together for short periods of time. Put them together on neutral ground, for example your living room, rather than in one of their environments. Make sure you're always there and watching their behavior! Rabbits chasing each other and some nipping is normal, but if you notice any escalation in behavior separate them and try again at a later date.
- You'll need to introduce them to each other for short periods a few times. As they get more comfortable, gradually increase the amount of time they spend together and introduce toys, food, and plenty of hiding places.
- Ensure you have something to break up any bunny fights. Suggestions include sturdy cardboard, dust pan, or oven mitts to ensure you can safely separate them.
- Positive signs that things are going well include sitting or lying side by side, your rabbits grooming each other, sleeping next to each other and playing together.
- Negative signs that you should slow down the bonding process or separate them can include chasing each other, fighting, growling or one rabbit mounting the other.
- Once your rabbits are regularly showing signs of positive behavior and are spending one to two hours a day together without any issues, you can introduce them to their shared living space. Make sure it's as big as possible with lots of hiding places, access to plenty of hay and fresh, clean water. For more information on housing, check out our guide.

4101 Eisenhower Ave., Alexandria VA | 703-746-4774
AlexandriaAnimals.org