

Introducing Adult Gerbils

Adult Gerbils can be very territorial. They will usually be very aggressive towards a gerbil that they see as an intruder and will fight to the death to try and drive away unfamiliar gerbils. Gerbils aged under 10 weeks in age can normally be introduced to one another, but if one or both gerbils are over this age introductions can be very difficult. Many people have different methods for introducing adults. Methods that rely on gerbils just "fighting it out" are not recommended. Even if the gerbils settle down, fighting can flare up days or even weeks later. A suggested method that takes advantage of a gerbils natural tendency to mark their territory is known as "the split cage method" and works like this:

1. Get yourself a tank or cage that you can split into two halves in a way that means that the gerbils on each side can see and smell one another but cannot bite or scratch one another through the bars. You can buy dedicated hamster style cages that have a wire partition down the middle. If you can't get one of them then you can either use a fine wire mesh fitted to a frame that fits diagonally in a glass tank, or you can use a smaller hamster style cage inside a larger cage or tank.
2. Place one gerbil one side of the partition and the other on the other.
3. Every two hours or so swap the gerbils around.
4. Do this for about three days.
5. Remove the partition.
6. Watch your gerbils carefully for at least three hours. If they start to fight then start again from stage 2 above.

This method works because by the time you remove the barrier the gerbils will both recognise the territory as belonging to them and they will both think of the scent of the other gerbil as a usual part of their home territory. If they are still fighting after you have done this about three times then it probably won't work. Some gerbils, especially some females, will never accept another gerbil once they have been living alone.

A few points worth remembering:

Males are much easier to pair up than females. Males are very protective towards smaller gerbils so introducing a lone male to one or more 5 week old pups is usually very easy. If you are doing this you may not need to wait three days. One day of the split cage method may be enough.

Females can be much more aggressive than males. Give them longer to get used to one another.

Never introduce a gerbil to a group of adult gerbils or try to introduce two groups of adults. Fighting is almost inevitable.

Because females can be so aggressive it is usually best to keep females in pairs whilst males can be kept in larger groups without much trouble.

Hopefully, by following this advice you will be able to pair up lone gerbils safely and give them the companionship that gerbils need as social animals.

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