

# Build a hamster run

Hamsters need plenty of exercise so keep them healthy by engineering an exciting run out of recyclable materials

## Don't forget!

Keep the hamster's drinking bottle filled up with water, they need to stay hydrated while they are active.

### Fact 1

Hamsters that live in the wild like to dig burrows, which become a set of tunnels.

### Fact 2

They choose this underground system as their living space.

### Fact 5

Hamsters also use this subterranean area to keep their food in.

### Fact 3

Another food store is their cheeks, which they use as pouches to keep food as they move back to their colony, so they can eat it later.

### Fact 4

Similarly, you may have noticed domestic hamsters like to store their food under the bedding in their cage.

**H**amsters love to run and climb, so why not build them an elaborate hamster run? Working out the best way to build a structure that will give these small animals the exercise they need requires basic engineering skills, including analysis and refinement during the build. Encourage your section to build a run using a variety of supports and structures, with slopes at varying and constant angles. Part of the design process requires the young people to test and make adjustments as they go along, to decide which elements are working and where there is room for improvement. The run will also be suitable for gerbils and mice, so they'll benefit from a run too. If you don't have a small pet, you can always use the structure as a marble run!



## Suitable for Beavers and Cubs

### You will need

- recyclable materials, e.g. cardboard tubes, egg cartons, cardboard boxes, yoghurt containers
- masking tape
- marbles
- scissors
- duct tape

### Instructions

- 1** To prepare for this activity, ask your section to bring in recyclable materials from home such as empty egg cartons, clean yoghurt pots, cardboard tubes, etc.
- 2** Pool all of the materials the group has collected and discuss which ones will be useful for the marble run.
- 3** Prepare your area. Depending on the meeting hut's facilities, you can either build the hamster run against

a wall by taping the pieces to the surface, or to a large piece of board. If you use the floor you will need to use some of the recyclable materials to rest the run on so it has different levels.

**4** Before you begin building each section of the run, encourage the young people to have a quick discussion about what will work, which pieces to use and where to stick them. Talk about how they can cut the recyclables to customise them for the run.

**5** Start to build the run, and keep testing it with a marble to check it is working. Make sure the different sections are big enough so that a hamster will have no difficulty in running around inside it. If it's not working, you can remove the tape and re-stick it. Build sections up and down – the more sections the better. Repeat this process of discussion, building and testing all the way through until the run is complete.

## Wogglebox



**Kyran says:**  
'I liked making the hamster run. It was fun to work on as a team and make something to help a little animal.'

**Leader Amy Keogh:**  
'I thought this was a great idea as the resources needed are free every-day items. The activity sparked conversations about animals and their wild habitats, recycling and finding new ways to use things we normally throw away. They learned that working together can lead to making better things than we can on our own.'

## Time needed 45 minutes

### Badge



Pets at Home partners the Beaver Animal Friend and Cub Animal Carer Activity Badges

### Partner



where pets come first

### Outcomes

Making a hamster run will give the young people the opportunity to work as a team. They will put into practice basic building skills and gain an understanding of how a hamster run structure works. They'll learn how to problem-solve, how to refine the build and devise ways to improve it as they go along. It will also give them the chance to think about the benefits small animals such as hamsters gain from exercise and to think about the animal's needs as they design and build the run.

### Taking it further

To take practical steps towards the Beaver Animal Friend and Cub Animal Carer Activity Badges, your young people could consider taking care of an animal for two months by giving it the correct foods, learning to recognise common traits as well as grooming, cleaning and exercising the animal.

### More information

For more activity ideas and to download Activity Badge resources, visit:  
[scouts.org.uk/petsathome](https://scouts.org.uk/petsathome).

