



Bunny Proofing Tips and Tricks

Rabbits like to chew and dig! It's natural behavior and once they get started, it's hard to stop without providing them alternate safe and fun activities. Bored rabbits become naughty rabbits. If you're not around to talk to them as you prepare dinner, watch TV, or just read, your rabbit will become bored and resort to behavior that gets your attention - especially if it gets you really excited!

First of all, ensure your rabbit is spayed or neutered as that will help those impulses to dig, tear, and chew up items to make a nest or mark territory. Then perform some simple bunny proofing of your home to make it safe for bunny, and to prevent damage of your furnishings and other belongings.

Below are some ideas for preventing or working around the various types of "naughty but natural" bunny behavior:

Set Guidelines

The first and probably most important key to preventing damage to your home is: **DO NOT GIVE YOUR RABBIT UNSUPERVISED FREE RUN OF YOUR HOME.** Give your rabbits a cage or pen, and provide a routine that allows them plenty of run time, but in a bunny proofed and supervised area. There is nothing sadder than to have someone return their beloved rabbits to us, after having them for a year or more, because their house has been destroyed and they refuse to limit the rabbits' free run. This simple first rule is often the key to a happy bunny home.

Prevent Electrical Damage

To prevent the injury or death of your rabbit, be sure to protect all your light, power, telephone, and other cords. Not only will you lose the use of that appliance, your rabbit can get a nasty shock and if the voltage is high enough, could die from making contact with a live wire. Home improvement, auto supply, and computer accessory stores carry many different items to help you tie-up, cover, hang, and generally get cords out of the way. This photo shows an example of cords that have been bunny proofed.



Note: The photo, right, shows a variety of materials used to cover electrical cords.



Block Off Hazardous Areas

Prevent bunny from even getting near a multitude of electrical cords and other items, in your entertainment center, computer room, or garage. Keep doors closed, use baby gates, and block off entertainment centers. Don't give bunny the chance to get into or behind these hazardous areas.

Note: Furniture grade plywood has been cut to fit behind the speakers and to block off access to the entertainment center and the cords behind it.

Move Plants, Books, and Heavy Objects

Take all your plants and move them up to a higher location where bunny cannot reach them. Many common houseplants are extremely toxic to rabbits and can cause death from poisoning. If the plant tends to drop leaves or blooms, move it to a room that the bunnies do not use. Remove books from the bottom of bookshelves to prevent chewed corners and torn covers. Also, be sure to look around for heavy decorative objects such as vases, statuettes, etc., that may easily be knocked over.

Cover Carpets and Linoleum

Use carpet squares, tile squares, washable throw rugs, and other items to cover carpet corners, linoleum, or places where bunny has shown a desire to dig, chew, or eliminate. Also add an extra litterbox or two while bunny is first venturing into new territory. This reinforces your litter training and helps to prevent accidents and a preference for the corner under your end table as a bathroom. If your rabbit exhibits a preference for a particular location, place a litterbox in that spot.

Note: Carpet pieces, grass mats, or tile squares can be used to protect your floor.

Bitter Preparations

There are many bitter preparations on the market that can safely be used to prevent chewing or digging in a particular area. They are probably not wise to use if you have small children, as they could also suffer from the affects of the bitter taste. These preparations do not always work, as some bunnies just consider them "frosting on the cake," so you need to experiment to see which is successful for you. Just be sure they are not harmful to pets, humans, or your fabrics and wood finishes. Spray them on furniture, baseboards, carpet corners, etc., to prevent bunny from returning to that area to dig or chew.



Provide Safe and Fun Alternatives

Finally, now that you've said "No!" to just about everything your mischievous bunny might want, be sure to provide him with some safe and fun alternatives for chewing or digging. For digging, give bunny an enclosed cardboard box with a hole cut in each end. Fill the box with hay or shredded paper and let him get inside and chew, dig, and shred to his heart's content!

Give bunny an old phone book that he can rip, tear, and shred, to his delight! Take toilet paper or paper towel tubes and fill them with hay or paper for chewing fun. You can also give bunny a variety of wicker baskets, chew rings, and hay-filled balls, to keep their busy teeth occupied.

Bottom line: keep your bunny active, happy, and spend plenty of time interacting with them so they don't get bored. And be sure your bunny is spayed or neutered, to prevent destructive behaviors in the first place. Remember, an active bunny is a happy bunny!



Note: You can see, in this photo, bunny has a lot to choose from to keep him happy and out of trouble.

Sources:

Many of the toys and chew deterrent products shown on this page can be found at:

- HRS [Bunny Supply Store](#)
- Busy Bunny www.busybunny.com
- BunnyBytes www.bunnybytes.com
- CatsandRabbitsandMore: www.catsandrabbitsandmore.com
- Cost Plus or Pier 1