



**MAKE HENRY
HAMSTER A
HAPPY HOME**

Parent-led activity

Length: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Suggested ages: 4 – 8 years old

What you need:

- Just the presentation, plus a sense of fun and imagination!

Key words

- Welfare needs
- Companionship
- Home
- Normal behaviour
- Diet
- Vet care



Useful web pages if you'd like to know more

- woodgreen.org.uk/pet-advice/article/hamsters-your-day-to-day-guide
- woodgreen.org.uk/pet-advice/article/introduction-to-hamsters
- www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/section/9



PRESENTATION GUIDE

SLIDE 1. Introduce Wood Green, The Animals Charity. Explain Wood Green is an animal charity, helping thousands of pets every year. Ask your child: what pets do you think might be staying at Wood Green, looking for loving new homes?

SLIDE 2. Listen to their ideas and share with them all the animals that stay at Wood Green – everything from cats and dogs to rats, guinea pigs, chinchillas, degus, chickens, ferrets, hamsters, mice, gerbils and rabbits. Explain all of the animals at Wood Green are homeless and looking for a new owner to look after them. Their challenge today is to discover all the things hamsters need to be a healthy and happy pet.



Main section

SLIDE 3. Introduce Henry hamster, a Syrian hamster. Explain Henry hamster needs a home and somewhere to stay where he will be healthy and happy – show the **home** symbol. A safe home is something every pet needs to be healthy and happy. This is one of their welfare needs. Ask your child if they would like to help you choose him a fabulous new home.



SLIDE 4. Show pictures of three different homes to choose from for Henry – small, medium and large. Ask your child which they think would be best and why.

"If I gave you the choice of only living in a tiny bedroom or a whole house / flat forever, which would you choose? You would probably choose the whole house or flat and it's the same for small pets. Just because they are small, doesn't mean they want a small home – it's the bigger, the better for them!"

SLIDE 5. Explain how the biggest cage gives Henry the most room to live in. When it comes to cages for hamsters, or any small pet, the bigger the cage, the happier they will be. Discuss how Henry might feel if he spent his whole life in the small cage.

Stop suddenly and pretend you have heard Henry the hamster whisper to you through the screen. Ask your child to be really quiet and lean right against the screen to listen to him speak to you.

"What's that Henry? You feel sad?"

Ask your child why they think Henry still feels sad even though they've given him a nice big home.

"Does he have everything in it that he needs to be healthy and happy?"

Pretend Henry has asked you to help make his cage a really lovely home to make him happy.

"Would you like to help Henry? Let's take a look at how we can help him."

SLIDE 6. Explain the first thing Henry needs is his home made more comfy, share the items on the screen that could be used as bedding – hay, sawdust and shredded paper.

Ask your child to take a look at each and decide which bedding they would like to choose for Henry.

"Shall we see which bedding Henry would prefer?"

SLIDE 7. Reveal Henry in a cage with shredded paper. Sawdust can be very dusty for small animals and might also contain little bugs called mites, that are a bit like head lice, that can make him itchy. The hay might tangle round his little body and get him into a pickle, which leaves us the shredded paper.

Shredded paper makes great soft bedding for small pets like Henry, plus it's free if you use old paper to make it!

"Oh just a minute, I think I heard something. What's that Henry? You're tired? You want somewhere soft and cosy to sleep? Ok, I think we can help you with that."

Ask your child to come up with ideas of where Henry could sleep.

"Shall we take a look at where Henry would like to sleep?"

SLIDE 8. "Ahhhh. Look at Henry now! He's all tucked up in a little hamster house filled with some nice soft tissue."

Ask your child if they think Henry is happy now. Do they think he might be a bit bored? Guess what he would like to play with.

"How about an Xbox? A dog toy? No? What about these?"

SLIDE 9. Show pictures of a tunnel, an old children's toy and two more plastic pet toys. Ask your child which they think Henry would like and why.

SLIDE 10. "What did he choose? Shall we watch this video and see?"

He liked all of them! Explain as well as tunnels and plastic pet toys, old children's toys make brilliant climbing frames for hamsters, they're a bit like adventure playgrounds for small pets! In fact all of these toys let Henry the hamster run around, climb and explore, just like he would if he lived in the wild – these are his normal behaviours and he needs to be able to do these to be happy. Show the **normal behaviour** symbol and add that hamsters like to run around and explore just like your child enjoys running around and exploring too. Pretend again that you hear a little voice coming from the screen and ask your child to be very quiet. Henry talks to you and says his home is now very nice but he is hungry and thirsty. Ask your child to whisper to you what they think Henry might like to eat and drink.



SLIDE 11. Show a picture of Henry's water bowl and a small egg cup full of hamster food, along with the **diet** symbol. Explain that fresh water to drink and the right food are very important for all pets. The egg cup is all the food Henry needs to eat in just one day. Ask how Henry would like to be fed his hamster food – a really fun way is to sprinkle or scatter food into the cage for him to find. This is much more fun than having all his food in a bowl and is similar to how a hamster would find food in the wild.



SLIDE 12. Watch a video of someone scatter feeding a hamster at Wood Green.

"How do you think Henry feels now he has a fabulous home, some toys, food and water. Do you think he might be lonely at all?"

SLIDE 13. Show the **companionship** symbol and explain all pets need the right sort of company or friends. Some would like a friend. Some wouldn't. Pretend you hear Henry talking again. Listen to him whisper to you. Explain you just found out something new – Henry said he would like the child to be his friend, Syrian hamsters prefer to live on their own with no hamster friends, they like human friends best. They are unlike other pets such as rabbits and guinea pigs who are much happier with a friend the same as them.



SLIDE 14. Show a picture of Henry's cage now looking fabulous and of him with it all to himself.
"Henry really does look very happy in there, thank you for helping make him such a lovely home. Shall we just make sure that we would know what to do if Henry became ill or hurt himself. Where would he need to go?"

SLIDE 15. Show a **vet care** symbol. Explain all pets including hamsters, need vet care if they are poorly to help make them better again and for regular checks to stay healthy and happy.



Ending

SLIDE 16. Take a look at the five different welfare needs that Henry needed to be healthy and happy:

Home	the bigger the better
Diet	scatter fed hamster food and water
Companionship	human friends not hamster friends
Normal behaviour	lots of toys
Vet care	vet care if poorly

Ask your child to remind you what they each meant for him. Let Henry whisper to you again and feed back

"Henry says that although it's important that we give him a fabulous home, we also need to know how to behave around him so he doesn't get scared. He'd like you to have your own special pet hamster from your imagination for the next few minutes to discover how sensible you can be around pets!"

Ask your child if they are ready for their imaginary hamster and how they need to act around their new pet. Ask how a hamster might feel if we were noisy and not gentle with them.

"So now we know how to behave, cup your hands like this and pretend you have a hamster on them?"

Show how to gently cup hands together and pretend there is a hamster sitting on them.

"Henry wants you to think of a name for your hamster and then give them a really gentle stroke with one hand. Once your hamster has had a stroke, can you tell them in a whispering voice everything that we've put into Henry's home today so that he will be healthy and happy."

Congratulations! You are now hamster experts!



**WHY NOT PRINT OUT OUR FUN
HAMSTER ACTIVITY SHEETS
TO CONTINUE YOUR LEARNING?**



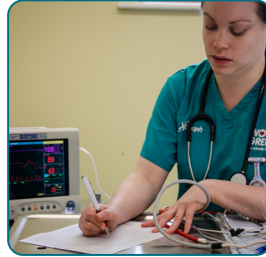
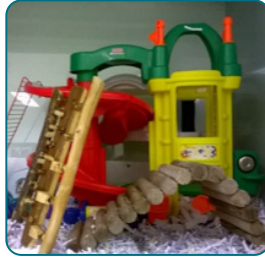


The Big Five CHALLENGE!



Can you **MATCH** these five different pictures to their correct welfare **NEED**?

All pets need things to feel **happy and healthy**.



Answers: Vet care – vet check, Home – hamster cage, Normal behaviour – toys inside home, Companionship – in owner's hand, Diet – Hamster drinking from a water bowl.



WHAT'S MISSING?

Can you **choose the correct words** to finish these sentences about happy hamsters?

The _____ the cage, the happier a hamster will be.

Scattering food for a hamster makes it _____ to find.

_____ friends are the best friends for Henry the Syrian hamster.

Hamsters love old children's _____ to climb and explore.

If your hamster is poorly, it's important to take it to the _____.

Missing words:

vet fun
bigger
people toys



Answers: The **bigger** the cage, the happier a hamster will be. Scattering food for a hamster makes it **fun** to find. **People** friends are the best friends for Henry the Syrian hamster. Hamsters love old children's **toys** to climb and explore. If your hamster is poorly, it's important to take it to the **vet**.



CAN YOU MAKE THE PERFECT HOME FOR A SYRIAN HAMSTER

HOME
SWEET
HOME

On a piece of paper can you draw, colour and cut out these items for a pet hamster

- 2 different hamster bedrooms filled with soft tissue
- A water bowl
- Pieces of scattered food
- Tunnels

Place some string on the floor in a large rectangle shape or place some large sheets of newspaper on the floor to make the outline of a lovely big cage and then place your cut out items inside.

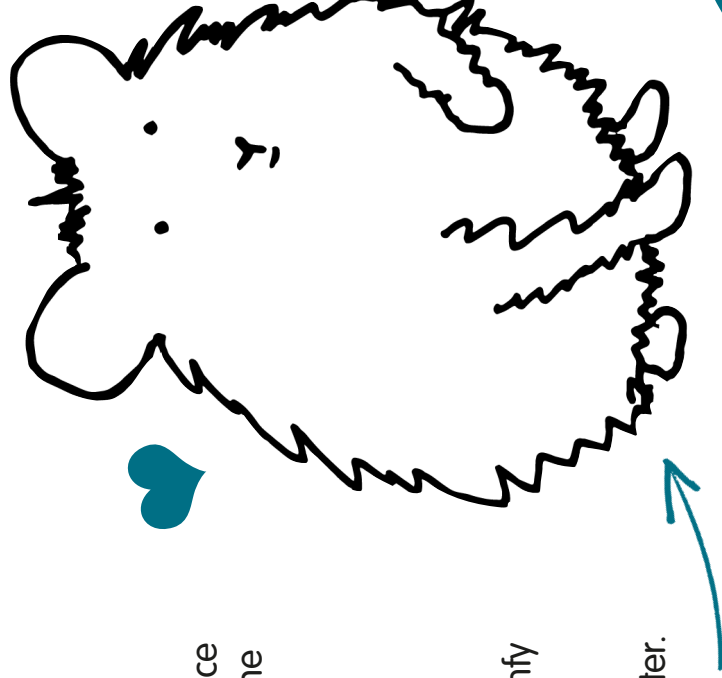
Your hamster also needs an old children's toy to use as a climbing frame – can you find one to add to your cage?

Your home will also need some shredded paper to make it comfy – add some if you have any or draw your own to add in.

When your home is all finished, colour in and cut out this hamster. Think of a name for him / her and find a favourite spot in your cage for it to go.

CONGRATULATIONS! Your happy hamster home is complete.

We'd love to see your creations so why not ask an adult to take a photo and share it with us at community@woodgreen.org.uk or upload it onto our Wood Green facebook page.



Happy
hamster home
making!