

How to Build a Nest Box

This paper describes how to build a nest box for baby rabbits. The nest box should be easy to clean, have high sides & be heavy enough (& with straight sides) so it wouldn't get tipped over. It's best to have one without a top, to make it easier to check on the babies.

A metal nest box is ok, as long as you make sure it's not in an area where it can get cold, which would make the babies cold. Also, if you use a heating pad under the cage, be sure the metal does not get too hot. A cardboard box is ok, but it can get soggy & smelly pretty quickly. A wooden box is hard to clean.

A plastic litter box is close, but the sides are not high enough. This paper describes how to add cardboard to the sides to make them higher. While it's best to not disturb the nest until the babies open their eyes (when they are about 10 days old), if the mom uses the nest box as a litter box, then it may need to be cleaned. The plastic litter box can be easily cleaned if needed. If the cardboard sides get soiled, they can be tossed and new ones easily made, without disturbing the nest too much.

The sides should be high enough so the babies cannot accidentally crawl out. A baby can also be accidentally pulled out when the mother jumps out of the box & a baby is still attached to a nipple. A dwarf mother (2 lbs.) can leap over a 1.5 foot wall, so you don't have to worry about having the sides too high for the mother to jump over. Just make sure she knows the babies are in the nest box. Determining the height of the sides is an art. For example, for a dwarf mother (2 lbs.), you can use cardboard sides that are 5.5" tall.

Be sure the nest box is large enough for the mom to comfortably get in & move around. For a description of what to add to the nest box for padding & warmth, see "Make the Nest Box" in: http://curiousbunny.com/newborn_rabbits_detail.pdf.

Depending on the type of litter box you use, the procedure for adding the cardboard sides is different, so the instructions are given separately. Photos are included at the end.

Litter Box With Sloping Sides:

Use a “high back” litter box. The back is high & the front is low, with sloping sides. Determine the height of the cardboard sides (see above). For this type of litter box, the height of the cardboard must be less than or equal to the height of the back of the litter box. For the length, add the length of the 2 sides & the front (minus a few inches). Cut the cardboard to size. Bend the cardboard so it will fit on the inside of the litter box, touching the sides & the front. Push down on the cardboard to make sure it’s touching the bottom of the box. Then use binder clips to attach the cardboard to the sides. Since the sides are sloping, attach the clips where the height of the cardboard meets the height of the sides.

Litter Box With Equal Height Sides:

Use a litter box that has sides that are all the same height. Determine the height of the cardboard sides (see above). For this type of litter box, the height of the cardboard will be higher than the sides of the litter box. For the length, add the length of all 4 sides & add several inches. Cut the cardboard to size. Bend the cardboard so it will fit on the inside of the litter box, touching all 4 sides. At the back, the cardboard will overlap. On the sides, cut out rectangles so the bottom of the hole is at the same height as the top of the sides of the box. The size of the cutout rectangle will be the width & height of a binder clip (not including the tabs).

Push down on the cardboard to make sure it’s touching the bottom of the box. Then feed the tab of a binder clip through the cutout area & clip the cardboard to the box. On the inside, leave the tab up to help block the hole. Cut the scraps of cardboard down a bit & squeeze them in the holes to block them (shown on one side in the picture). Since the sides of the box are probably not exactly vertical, the overlap of the cardboard in the back will spread apart, so don’t put a clip there.

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Box with sloping sides



Box with equal height sides

