

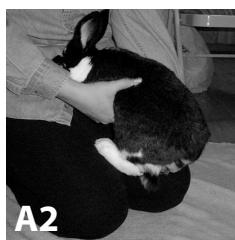
# Handling Your Rabbit

Rabbits have powerful hind legs and sharp nails. Learning how to safely pick up and set down your rabbit will prevent injuries to you both.

## Picking up your rabbit when he's facing you



Kneel on the floor. As the rabbit approaches you, place one hand under the his ribs and the other behind his hips. (A1)



The rabbit's natural inclination is going to be to hop away from the hand behind him. Use the

hand at his ribs to help guide that hop up and onto your lap. When you are first working with your rabbit, you can release him from this position once he has been good for a few seconds. You may want to use a release command so that the rabbit will eventually learn that he cannot leave your lap until you have said it is okay. (A2)

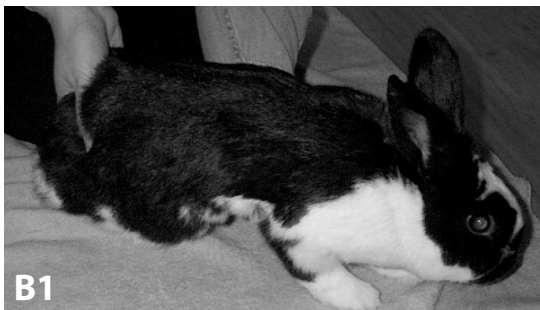


Continue the motion that you used to get the rabbit onto your lap and lift the rabbit so that all four feet are against your ribs and stomach.

Keep one hand behind his hips and move the other over his shoulders. From here, you can go on to release the rabbit. (A3)



## If the rabbit is facing away from you

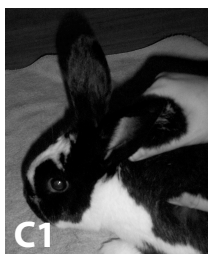


rabbit's ribs to lift and use the hand behind his hips to support his weight. (B1)

Place the rabbit's backbone along your breast bone. It is generally easiest to pick up the rabbit if you have a finger between his front legs, your thumb on one side of the rabbit's body and your remaining three fingers on the other side. (B2)

This hold can be useful if you have a second person to help you trim toenails as all four feet are facing out and are accessible to the helper.

## Picking up a reluctant rabbit



When you have a reluctant (or very smart) rabbit, he will often find a way to hop out of the above holds before you can get a good grip. For these rabbits, you can gently but firmly grip the rabbit by the scruff of the neck with one hand while placing the other hand under his ribs/stomach. (C1)

Using both hands to support the rabbit's weight, lift him up and to the left. Your left hand and lower arm will support the rabbit's body while your grip on his scruff (which you may need to readjust) will keep him from hopping off. (C2)

Still kneeling, wait until the rabbit is near your knees but moving or facing away from you. Place one hand under his ribs and the other behind his hips. Use the hand under the



B2



C2

## Setting your bunny down



Reverse your hold on the rabbit's shoulders so that your right hand is now under the rabbit's ribs/stomach. Move both hands out and down so that the rabbit continues to face you but is getting closer to the ground. **(D1)**

Move your left hand away from the rabbit and continue to lower your right hand towards the ground. Once you have the rabbit in this hold, you can either release him or move on to put him on his back. **(D2)**

To release him, simply lean forward and move the hand at his ribs towards the floor. If you are going to use a release command, use it now. The rabbit will then hop away.



## Laying the rabbit on its back



For the sake of the instructions, we are assuming that you have picked the rabbit up with your left hand under his hips and your right hand at his ribs. In this case, your next step is to lift your left shoulder and slide your arm in toward the rabbit while turning the rabbit's back out toward your arm. **(E1)**

Slide your left hand across your body and lower your shoulder. Be sure the rabbit's back remains in contact with your left arm so that he will feel secure. Keep a gentle but firm pressure on the rabbit's chest with your right hand so he doesn't twist out and hop off. Once the rabbit is on his back, you can snuggle for a little bit, but be sure to release the rabbit while he is still behaving well. **(E2)**



## Rewarding your rabbit



Once your rabbit has successfully made it back to the ground without incident, reward him with a small treat such as a piece of his favorite green or fruit. **(F1)**

## Calming a skittish rabbit

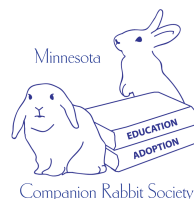
Rabbits believe that if they cannot see something then it is not scary. Calming a frightened or skittish rabbit can be as simple as covering his eyes with your hand. **(G1)**



## Limiting your rabbit's space

Before attempting to pick up your rabbit, limit the rabbit's escape route. An exercise pen or a small room like a bathroom works well. With many rabbits, a towel in the middle of a slippery floor is enough.

*Special thanks to Tuxedo for being the model bun of this information.  
No Tuxedos were harmed in the making of this pamphlet.*



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The Minnesota Companion Rabbit Society (MCRS) is a volunteer-based, non-profit organization whose primary goals are education and adoption. By educating the public and assisting humane organizations, MCRS works to reduce the number of unwanted rabbits and improve the lives of companion rabbits. Through adoption, MCRS helps rabbits from area shelters and animal control facilities find permanent homes.