

Introduction (10 mins): What's Up, Cavy?

Let's dive into the wonderful world of guinea pigs, also known as cavies! Did you know they originally come from the Andes Mountains in South America? They aren't related to pigs at all! Today, we're going to become Guinea Pig Gurus by learning all about their bodies, what they eat, how they act, and how to take great care of them.

Discussion Starter: What do you already know or love about guinea pigs?

Activity 1: Guinea Pig Anatomy 101 (20 mins)

Using online diagrams, book illustrations, or observing a pet (if available), let's explore the guinea pig's body.

- Identify key external parts: Whiskers (for sensing), ears (great hearing!), eyes (located on the sides for wide vision), nose, teeth (they grow continuously!), feet (four toes on front, three on back), fur coat.
- Talk about their general shape – why are they built low to the ground? (Good for hiding and burrowing).
- *Task:* Draw a simple picture of a guinea pig and label at least five parts you learned about. Briefly write down the function of each part next to its label.

Activity 2: Cavy Cuisine - What's for Dinner? (20 mins)

Guinea pigs are herbivores! Their diet is super important for their health.

- **Hay is #1:** Unlimited Timothy hay (or other grass hay) is crucial for digestion and dental health.
- **Vitamin C Power:** Guinea pigs can't make their own Vitamin C, just like humans! They need it from fresh veggies (like bell peppers, parsley) and special Vitamin C-enriched pellets.
- **Fresh Veggies:** A small variety daily. Research which ones are safe (e.g., romaine lettuce, cucumber) and which are not (e.g., iceberg lettuce, potatoes, onions).
- **Pellets:** Plain, high-quality pellets specifically for guinea pigs (not rabbits or other animals).
- **Fresh Water:** Always available!

Task: Create a sample 'Daily Menu' for a guinea pig, including hay, specific safe vegetables, and pellets. Explain why Vitamin C is essential in one sentence.

Activity 3: Talk Like a Cavy - Behavior Decoding (15 mins)

Guinea pigs communicate through sounds and actions!

- **Wheeking:** Loud squeal, often means excitement (especially for food!).
- **Popcorning:** Hopping and twisting in the air, means happiness and excitement.
- **Rumbling:** Deep purring sound. Can mean contentment, but also dominance or annoyance depending on context.
- **Chattering:** Teeth grinding sound, often means annoyance or warning.
- **Freezing:** Standing completely still, usually indicates fear or uncertainty.

Task: If you have a guinea pig, observe its behavior for a few minutes and note down any actions or sounds. If not, watch a short online video of guinea pig behavior. Try to guess what the behaviors mean based on what we learned.

Activity 4: Home Sweet Home - Habitat Design (15 mins)

A good home keeps a guinea pig safe, healthy, and happy.

- **Size Matters:** Needs plenty of space to run around (research recommended cage sizes).
- **Bedding:** Soft, absorbent bedding like paper-based or fleece liners (avoid cedar or pine shavings).
- **Hideouts:** Essential for feeling secure (e.g., plastic igloos, fleece tunnels, wooden houses).
- **Food & Water:** Heavy ceramic bowls (harder to tip) and a sipper bottle or bowl for water.
- **Enrichment:** Safe toys to chew on (e.g., cardboard tubes, wooden chew toys) and space for exercise.

Task: On a piece of paper, design your 'Dream Guinea Pig Habitat'. Draw the layout and label the essential items (cage/enclosure outline, food bowl, water bottle/bowl, hideout, bedding area, hay rack).

Wrap-up & Assessment (10 mins): Guinea Pig Guru Check!

Let's review what we learned!

- Share your labeled drawing, sample menu, behavior observations, and habitat design.
- Quick Quiz: What's the most important part of a guinea pig's diet? Why do they need Vitamin C daily? Name one happy behavior.
- *Final Task:* Start creating a simple 'Guinea Pig Care Checklist' in your notebook, listing the top 5 most important things someone needs to do every day or week to care for a guinea pig properly.