

# The 14-Day Enclosure Stress Assessment Tool

Hamsters often exhibit repetitive stress behaviors when their environment lacks necessary enrichment or when external factors disrupt their natural instincts. This assessment tool is designed to help you track specific environmental variables over two weeks to pinpoint the root cause of your hamster's stress.

## Phase 1: The Assessment Protocol

Before starting the log, clearly define what you are observing.

- **Problem Statement:** The hamster is exhibiting repetitive stress behaviors at night (e.g., bar biting, wall climbing, excessive pacing), indicating potential enclosure deficiencies.
- **Primary Objective:** To isolate and identify which environmental factors or daily routines correlate most strongly with spikes in the hamster's stress behaviors.

## Phase 2: The Environmental Variable Matrix

During the 14-day tracking period, you will monitor specific environmental inputs.

### Independent Variables (The Potential Triggers):

Track these daily, as they are the most likely culprits for fluctuating stress levels.

1. **Out-of-Enclosure Enrichment:** The total minutes the hamster spent in a secure, supervised playpen or free-roaming area.
2. **Daytime Room Noise/Disruption:** A subjective rating (1-10) of how loud or disruptive the room was during the hamster's crucial daytime sleep hours.
3. **Light Exposure (Evening):** Was the room brightly lit late into the evening after the hamster woke up? (Yes/No).

### Confounding Variables (The Controls):

You must keep these factors strictly consistent during the 14-day test. Changing them mid-test will ruin the data.

- **Bedding Depth:** Do not remove or drastically lower the bedding during the test period.
- **Wheel Availability:** Ensure the wheel is present, adequately sized, and spinning freely every single night.
- **Enclosure Location:** Do not move the enclosure to a new room during the 14 days.

## Phase 3: The 14-Day Granular Data Log

Fill this log out each morning based on your observations from the previous night.

Day	Playpen Time (Minutes)	Daytime Noise Level (1-10)	Bright Evening Lights? (Y/N)	Primary Stress Behavior Observed	Severity Score (1-5)
1					
2					
3					
4					
Cont.	... up to Day 14				

Note on Severity Score: \* 1: Mild (Occasional pacing, easily distracted)

- 3: Moderate (Persistent behavior for 10+ minutes, harder to distract)
- 5: Severe (Frantic, continuous bar biting/climbing, ignoring normal enrichment)

## Phase 4: Analysis & Habitat Upgrade

Once the 14 days are complete, transform your logged data into actionable upgrades for your hamster's environment.

### Step 1: Identify High-Stress Nights

Highlight every row where the Severity Score was a 4 or 5.

### Step 2: Perform the Trigger Analysis

Look across the highlighted rows to find common denominators:

- Did severe stress behaviors consistently occur on days with zero playpen time?
- Do high Daytime Noise Levels correlate perfectly with frantic behavior that night?
- Did bright evening lights disrupt their natural wake-up routine?

### **Step 3: The Upgrade Mandate**

Based on your findings, formulate a strict rule for your care routine moving forward.

- *Example Insight:* "My hamster's stress peaks on days when room noise is above a 6 and playpen time is under 15 minutes."
- *Example Upgrade:* "I will move the enclosure to a quieter room and mandate a minimum of 20 minutes of playpen time every evening."