



# Safe Methods for Introducing Sugar Gliders

by Elena Hill

So you started with a single glider and now have a new friend to introduce? How do you do that safely? Start with a wellness exam at your vet's for both gliders. Make sure to have fecals done on both gliders. Then a 30 day quarantine starts. Keep glider cages in different rooms of your home. Always make sure to wash hands and change clothing between handling the gliders. At the end of the quarantine period have fecals done again on both gliders. If they are both healthy then you're ready to begin the introduction process. Here is the introduction method that I use at Hill Haven Sugar Gliders. Going slowly and not skipping steps will help to insure the introduction is a success. *\*Note: the cages shown in the steps below are too small to be used as permanent housing for a glider. These cages are only used by the author for introductions.*

1. Set the two cages containing the gliders to be introduced side by side but 8 - 12 inches apart for 1 week. For the second week move cages 4 - 6 inches apart.



2. On the third week move the cages 2 - 4 inches apart. And on the fourth week move them side by side so they touch and start swapping their sleeping pouches every night for about 1 more week. You can make the switch either by giving the glider in cage "1" the sleeping pouch from the glider in cage "2" and vice versa (OR) just placing the glider and sleeping pouch from cage "1" into cage "2" and vice versa. I like to use both methods so the gliders can sleep in each other's pouches and play with each other's toys.



3. You'll wear two bonding pouches in this step. Put the glider in cage "1" in one pouch and put the cage "2" in the other bonding pouch. Wear the pouches at the same time for at least 2 hours a day for 1 week. During this time continue to do pouch swapping every night with the cages still sitting side by side.



4. Find a neutral place where neither glider has been and where there is no glider scent. You can use a pop up tent or even your bathroom for this step. Take a lot of toys and pouches in the tent or bathroom. Make sure you also have treats on hand like yogurt drops or meal worms. Then bring both gliders to the neutral play area that is set up. Turn the lights on low so the area is not bright. Open their pouches and lay them down on the floor and wait for them to come out or bribe them with treats. Never pull them out or force them to come out of their pouches. They should come out on their own.



5. After they come out of the pouches let them explore until they find one another on their own. Watch their body language closely. If you see a glider balling up and crabbing at the other glider then separate them and go back to pouch swapping. If both gliders are not showing any signs of fighting and they are just sniffing, grooming, and rubbing their heads on each other or if they both decide to go into a pouch together, then sit quietly and watch to see what happens.



Due the introduction play time for at least 30 minutes unless they are fighting and need to be separated. If the first intro play time went well then make the play time longer the next night. If it is also a success with no fighting you'll continue to make the playtime longer each night. Repeat this step for 7 days before moving on to the next step.



Two young males are shown here who are having their second play time together. Notice how they are not chasing each other and are actually looking away from each other? This shows us that they aren't afraid of one another.

6. The gliders will be ready to be put into the same cage after the last successful play time if there is still no fighting taking place. To prepare for this, you'll need to clean the cage that you will be using to put them together. Wash it completely to remove any scent of a previous glider. If you skip this step or don't get the cage clean enough it's likely that the introduction will not be successful. So be careful to make sure the cage extremely clean. Then place at least 3 clean sleeping pouches inside the cage. These pouches will give them some neutral ground. You can then place clean toys and a wheel in the cage. Again just make sure everything you put in the cage is very clean and does not have the scent of any previous gliders.

7. Place the cage in a room where you can hear them clearly so if you hear any sounds throughout the night you can go check on them to see if they are fighting or chasing each other around the cage. If they are fighting or chasing each other then separate them and put them back in their old cages. What this means is that it may have been too soon for them to be together. If you have to separate them, then the next night start back at play time again.

Make sure that your play times are longer ones so you can watch their body language to determine if they are ready to move back into the same cage together again.



Here is a picture of two gliders meeting in the same cage for the first time. Notice their body language is curious and not aggressive. These two became fast friends.

8. If you have taken all seven steps mentioned above and are having no success, then remove both cages from the room and put them in different rooms. Keep them in different rooms for about a month.

9. After the month is over, start at step 1 again and put both cages side by side. Try to take it slower this time round. You can easily add a week to each step before moving on to the next step.

This method may need to be done quite a few times before gliders will take each other as cage mates. Sometimes it works on the first or second try but don't be discouraged if it doesn't as you can try again in a month. You can try this intro method on the same two gliders as many times as you'd like because sometimes it takes repeated introductions for gliders to accept each other. However, if you have taken all the steps several times and the outcome continues to be fighting then these gliders are not meant to be a colony and it's time to find different gliders to try and introduce these gliders to.

## **WARNING!!!**

There is a "Wet Introduction Method" being promoted by some sugar glider websites and forums as a quick and easy way to get gliders together. This method is NOT vet recommended nor approved. According to my vet the method is risky and very dangerous. Do NOT use the "Wet Introduction Method" to introduce gliders.