

Proper Husbandry

Congrats on your new ball python! Please give this list a read through. If you already have/had ball pythons and see something in this list that makes you feel like you should change your current setup **please** consider changing it. If this is your first ball python then I highly recommend following the advice and instructions we provide. It is easy to assume a snake is healthy and happy in an environment that is actually stressful and dangerous for it because snakes do not show discomfort and illness the same way we are used to seeing it. By the time people notice their snake is behaving unusual and is ill it can be too late. The snake could have been sick for quite a while and their chances of survival can be slim at that point. All of this can be easily avoided by following these instructions and providing proper husbandry, CAGE SIZE, HUMIDITY, TEMPERATURE, THERMOSTATS, QUARANTINE, and remember do NOT COHABITAT!

Cages: Tub or Tank? SIZE MATTERS!!!!

Size matters when it comes to the enclosure you have for your ball python. If they are in an enclosure that is too big they will stop eating and become stressed. They are very shy animals and need a smaller space to feel secure. They **CANNOT** be housed together. If this happens one animal will become dominant and take the warm spots in the cage and the other will be left in the cold, they could possibly be male and female and you may accidentally have your female produce eggs, or worst case they could eat each other. These snakes are solitary creatures.

Please be sure to use the correct size enclosure for the your snake's size listed below. In the reptile community we measure the size of a snake by how many grams it weighs. If you do not have a scale you can find a cheap but good one at Walmart.

- Hatchlings: up to 200g 6-8qt or 1.5gl
- Juveniles: 200g-600g 12qt-15qt or 3gl-3.75gl
- Subadults: 600g-1500g 25qt-28qt or 6.25gl-7gl
- Adults: 1500g-2500g 25qt-28qt or 6.25gl-7gl
- Adults over 2500g 36qt-41qt or 9gl-10.25gl

Tubs are usually used for ball pythons for many reasons. I use tubs, but make sure you buy one that has clips on the lid so your new snake does not escape. This species requires specific humidity and tubs can hold humidity much better than tanks can. Tubs will make your life a lot easier when trying to keep your husbandry stable. When using tubs please make sure to drill/solder holes into the sides of the tub to ensure that your snake has good air movement. If

humidity is too high please drill more holes into the tub, or place a small bag of uncooked rice in the enclosure to absorb moisture. Tubs do not circulate heat well. However, I have used them and been successful with keeping proper husbandry. NOTE: You **CANNOT** use heat lights with ball pythons. They are nocturnal and having a light on constantly will cause them to stop feeding. It is harder to use a CHE (Ceramic heat emitter) with a dimmer **WITH** tubs but otherwise you can use a heat pad/heat tape as belly heat (see Heating Your Tank section for instructions on heating) and a thermostat.

Tanks keep temperature easier, but are really poor for keeping humidity. This can cause an array of problems. Personally, I do not use tanks, but it is possible, although harder, to provide proper husbandry with a tank. **ALWAYS** have locks on your lid. To heat your tank use both a CHE (Ceramic heat emitter) with a dimmer, and a heat pad/heat tape with a thermostat (installation instructions are in the Heating Your Tank section). Apply foil tape to completely cover the screen lid **BUT** leave an open area for the CHE. This will keep moisture from escaping and keep your humidity stable. Put your heat pad/ heat tape on the underside of the tank at this point. Use cypress mulch or Reptichip as these two will hold the best humidity. If you are still having issues with humidity you can use a larger water dish.

In **BOTH** please use an accurate device to measure temperature and humidity. The best device I have found is AcuRite Digital Humidity and Temperature Monitor 00325 from Walmart and it is very affordable.

Setting Up Your Cage

Watch our **How To Set Up A Tub For Ball Pythons: Complete Walkthrough on YouTube**

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkxAL79yFaM>) or read the text below:

You will need:

- An appropriate sized tub or tank
- A lid that locks into place
- A heat source (**two** if you have a tank) such as a Heat Pad / Heat Tape, or a Ceramic Heat Emitter (CHE)
- A dimmer if you have a CHE
- A thermostat if you have a Heat Pad/ Heat Tape
- Two Hides one for the cold side one for the warm side
- Substrate (Use aspen or paper towels if your humidity is too high, and cypress mulch or Reptichip if your humidity is too low)
- A Water Bowl
- Lots of Clutter

Once you have drilled holes around your tub OR finished taping the screen lid for the tank as stated above you can put the heat tape/heat pad under the enclosure. Make sure to put it on the **outside** of the enclosure or you will burn your animal. Check the Heating Your Tub section to ensure you are installing this correctly!

For the CHE place it on the top on the screen lid where you did not put any foil tape. Double check it is plugged into a dimmer to control the temperature. You will be shooting for

90F and you will **have to have** a Temperature Gun. These work by holding down a trigger and measuring the temperature of whatever they are pointed at with a laser. You are trying to have it be 90F. Check the Heating Your Tub section to ensure you are installing this correctly!

Next add the substrate you're going to be using. Use either aspen, paper towels, or coconut if you are trying to bring humidity down. If you are using a tank use cypress mulch or Reptichip. **DO NOT** use anything as a substrate unless you ask an expert or research it. You can kill your snake by having the incorrect bedding. I like to leave the area that I am placing my water bowl barren of substrate so that it sits evenly and it does not get soaked through with water. Your humidity should be around **55%-65%** and around **70%** when your snake is shedding.

Place a heavy water bowl in the enclosure and if you need higher humidity put a larger bowl in the enclosure.

Next place two hides in the cage. One on the 90F hotspot and one on the colder side. This way the snake can choose regulate its body and also feel secure. If you only have one hide chances are your snake will stay in that hide even if it is uncomfortably hot or cold for it.

Once everything is in place you may begin to put in clutter. Clutter is important! If added shy snakes are much more likely to eat! Any kind of plastic plants, crumpled newspaper, or crumpled paper towels. If you use paper as a bedding or clutter make sure to change it out very regularly so your snake is not living in a bacteria filled cage. Plastic plants are good to use but please don't use any that are covered in glitter or scented.

Place your hygrometer and thermometer in the cage and put the lid on the enclosure and clip it tight.

What Should My Temperature/Humidity Be?

- If you have ambient temperatures of 84F-86F then you **do not** need a warm and cold side.
- Cold side: 80F-82F
- Warm side: 88-90F
- Humidity should be 55%-65%,
- Humidity can be higher if your snake is shedding

Heating Your Tank

Temperature control is **critical** for the health of your snake. If it is too low your snake can get a respiratory infection, if it is too high your snake can suffer permanent brain damage. You can use a number of devices to safely heat an enclosure:

- CHE (Ceramic Heat Emitter) with a **dimmer**
- Heat Tape with a **thermostat**
- Heat Pad with a **thermostat**

DO NOT USE HEAT ROCKS. They are known to short out and they will fry your snake.

If you are using Heat Tape **WATCH THIS VIDEO** <https://youtu.be/XNjnCq0p4M4> You can get **ELECTROCUTED** if installed incorrectly.

When using a thermostat set it to 90F and put the prob under the heat tape/ heat mat and secure it with tape. This will keep the temperature around 90F so your snake does not get burned. You can use a Temperature Gun to find the exact temperature of the surface of the plastic/glass above the heat source and adjust the thermostat until the surface temperature is 90F. You **HAVE TO USE** a thermostat with a heat source or you will burn your snake. Make sure you allow a little gap between the the heat source and the floor to prevent fires.

When using a CHE you **HAVE TO USE** a dimmer. This will allow you to control the temperature. If you are using a tank with a screen lid you can set the CHE directly on top of that where you have left a little bit of the screen barren of foil tape. If you are using a tub then have the CHE hanging above it so it does not melt the plastic lid. Make sure nothing is touching the CHE or it could cause a **fire**.