

----- Feeding

Do not feed too large of prey. The largest prey should be no bigger than twice the size of the largest part of the snake you are feeding. Frozen/thawed is less expensive & easier to keep than live prey. It is also safer for your snake as dead prey can't fight back. If your snake refuses to eat frozen/thawed, you can feed live. Make sure you are present as live prey can & will fight back causing an injury to your pet. Diet consists mostly of small mammals, such as soft-furred rats, shrews & striped mice. Ball Pythons can be very finicky eaters, going off their food for months, eating only when they feel like it.

Seek veterinary attention if your pet changes behavior or becomes inactive; this may indicate the pet has an illness. Ball Python's watch for too much eating! (Pythons 'fast')

As a pet owner, you are responsible for proper pet practices. Be prepared to take an ill pet to a Veterinarian & know which Veterinarian in your area can treat your pet.



check-list ✓

Your pet Ball Python requires...

- Aquarium or Terrarium of appropriate size
- Red light / Heat source
- Under-tank heater or 'heated rock'
- Bathing dish or bowl(big enough for the snake)
- Substrate or bedding material
- 2 or more Caves/Dens (for hiding spots)
- Vines & branches (for climbing)
- Misting bottle (simple plant sprayer for water)
- Thermometer
- Sealable box for keeping 'live' food



Ball Python



- Size: Up to 6 ft. with an average of 3-5 ft. The females are generally larger.
- Life Span: Can easily live up to 35 years in captivity with the record at 48 years!

----- Temperament

The name ball python refers to the animal's tendency to curl into a ball when stressed or frightened. In this state, it can literally be rolled around. This terrestrial species is known for its defense strategy that involves coiling into a tight ball when threatened, with its head & neck tucked away in the middle. Another name, the royal python (from the Latin "regius") is based in part on the story that Cleopatra supposedly wore the snake around her wrist.

Due to their smaller size compared to other pythons & commonly docile temperament, these snakes are bred in captivity & have become popular as pets. Juveniles tend to be more aggressive at first, but typically calm down as they get used to human contact. All ball pythons are naturally shy about having their heads touched or handled by strangers; a normal reaction is for the ball to pull its head and neck sharply away from such contact. When held, the snake should grip YOU gently but firmly when moving around(the snake should hold on to you-not; you hold it).

Ball Pythons do not usually bite, but if a bite is going to happen, reaching your hand into the tank is typically when it does. The snake may not know your intentions & see you as a predator or confuse you with a food item. Bites very rarely happen & fortunately do not hurt any worse than getting a shot from the doctor. Once you've had your snake for awhile you will be able to "read" it based on it's body posture & activity cycles. In captivity, young ball pythons will grow about a foot a year during the first three years. They will reach sexual maturity in three to five years. The longest living ball python on record was over 48 years old when it died. These are one of the most kept snakes species.

----- Housing



Ball Pythons are a docile snake, generally considered friendly & a good pet choice.

Ball Pythons do not need much room. A 15 gallon fish tank is fine, to start. Once your Ball Python is close to full grown, a 25 gallon tank will be adequate, a 55 gallon would be better, but not necessary. All reptile environments must have tight fitting doors or lids. Your snake environment should include:

- **Substrate:** For substrate (bedding) aspen is a good way to go because it doesn't give off any oil. It also allows snakes to burrow when the mood strikes them. Green carpet, paper towel, mulch, or bark may also be substituted.
- **Heating:** The temperature in your snakes enclosure should be between 76 - 86 Fahrenheit with 90 in a "basking spot". At night the temperature can drop as low as 70 to 74. An under tank heater can be used as the only source of heat by putting it on half the tank. You also can use a red light 24/7 for added continual heat.
- **Decoration:** Balls need somewhere to hide. Two identical hides (one on each side of the tank) just big enough to allow your snake to curl up inside are necessary. Branches, vines, rocks, etc are good things to have in your enclosure to give your Snake something to climb on.
- **Water:** At all times there should be a large dish big enough to accommodate your Ball Python so they are able to soak in it. While snakes do drink, they get a lot of their moisture through soaking themselves.

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----- Shedding & Humidity



Misting your snake's cage with water every couple days should be enough to keep the humidity high enough at most times to keep your snake comfortable. A water (for soaking) dish keeps humidity up also as a tightly enclosed environment is recommended; if only for security purposes. Snakes & other reptiles are well known for the ability to escape their cages.

However, when your Ball Python goes into "blue" & begins its shed, it will need higher humidity & a few helpers. "Going into Blue" is something snakes do prior to their shed. That is when the skin over their eyes lifts in preparation causing their eyes to take on a bluish colour. During this time they become blind & it is advised not to touch or bother them as this is the most likely time they will strike as they are blind & defenseless. When your Python goes into blue you need to add something like a rough rock or large piece of bark, if these are not a part of the enclosure already. This gives your Ball Python something to rub up against to help them get the old skin layer off.

You can also make a shedding box, which is a simple crate, Tupperware container, a take out carton, (etc,) that has a hole cut out on the lid big enough to let the snake completely enter the box. Inside the box can be damp paper towel or damp reptile moss. This acts as a steam room which can be very helpful to a Ball Python during a difficult shed. Once your Ball has finished its shed sometimes not all the skin comes off, you can give it a warm bath & gently rub at the skin, usually this helps take off all the left over skin. Bathing your snake is often a bonding exercise for 'handled' snakes & your pet may enjoy the help, but be careful as they are sensitive during this period & are generally grumpy.

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