

Kingsnake Care guide

A Comprehensive Guide

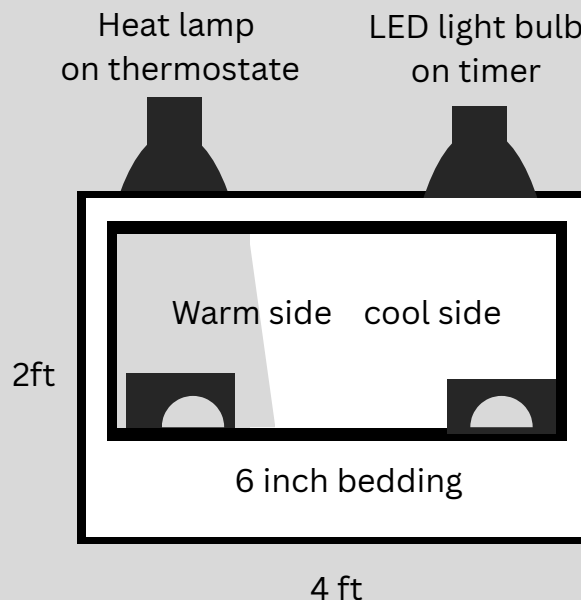
Enclosure

For an adult gopher snake, I recommend at least a 4x2x2 enclosure, but bigger is always better. Kingsnakes are active and curious, so give them plenty of room to move around, explore, climb, and burrow.

I recommend having:

A warm hide, A cool hide, Several other hiding spots, Branches, logs, and cork bark, Things to climb over and explore, Deep substrate for burrowing, and a water bowl large enough for the snake to completely curl up inside.

The enclosure should be secure because Kingsnakes are escape artists and can squeeze through surprisingly small spaces.



Heating and Temperature

I recommend using a heat bulb that produces no visible light and connecting it to a thermostat to keep heat within safe range. Put the heat source on one side of the enclosure instead of heating the whole thing. This gives the snake a temperature gradient so it can regulate its own temperature by moving between the warm and cool areas.

Temperatures:

Basking area: 85–90°F

Warm side: 80–85°F

Cool side: 70–75°F

Always use a thermostat with your heat source. and keep it around 3-5 inches away from your heat source for more accurate temperture regulation.

Lighting

Use a separate LED light on a timer for the day/night cycle.

Around 12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness is a good starting point.

Low-level UVB is recommended because it can provide additional benefits. Provide shaded areas so the snake can choose how much exposure it gets.

Handling
California kingsnakes can become very comfortable with regular, calm handling. Give a new snake time to settle into its enclosure before handling it heavily. Support the snake's body and allow it to move through your hands instead of restraining it unnecessarily. After feeding, leave the snake alone for about 48–72 hours to allow it to digest its meal and reduce the chance of regurgitation.

Quick Setup
Enclosure: 4x2x2 minimum for many adults, bigger recommended
Heat: Lightless heat bulb
Thermostat: Yes
Basking: 85–90°F
Warm: 80–85°F
Cool: 70–75°F
Humidity: 30–50%
Lighting: LED on timer
UVB: Recommended
Water: Large enough to curl up in
Substrate: Deep and burrowable
Food: Mice and rats, with appropriately sized quail/poultry for variety
Cohabitation: No, Kingsnakes are known to eat other snakes, including rattlesnakes
Temperature regulation: Give the snake a gradient and let it choose where it needs to be

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Feeding
Gopher snakes naturally eat rodents, rabbits, birds, eggs, lizards, and other small animals. For captive snakes, frozen/thawed rodents should make up the majority of their diet. Good prey choices include:

Mice, Rats, Quail and Appropriately sized quail eggs as an occasional variety
Prey size: Choose prey that creates a small, noticeable lump after being eaten. Don't routinely offer prey that is excessively large.

Feeding schedule:
• Hatchlings/juveniles: every 5–7 days
• Growing snakes: every 7–10 days
• Adults: every 10–14 days
Adjust the schedule based on the snake's body condition and growth rather than blindly following a calendar.
Never feed wild-caught prey because of the risk of parasites, disease, pesticides, and other contaminants.

Humidity

Gopher snakes generally do well with relatively low humidity. Aim for around 30–50% humidity. They don't need a constantly wet enclosure. A humid hide can be provided when needed, especially during shedding. a good way to keep track of the humidity in the tank is with a Geovue Thermostat and Hydrometer.

Substrate

Gopher snakes naturally spend time burrowing, so give them deep, burrowable substrate.

Good options include:

- Aspen
- Soil-based mixes
- Naturalistic arid substrate
- Other appropriate dry, burrowable substrates

Give them enough depth that they can

actually dig and make tunnels and make sure to provide plenty of enrichment around the tank.

I personally use a mix of coco husk,

sphagnum moss and coco fiber. the specific mixture of each part can vary depending on the humidity of your home.