



THE CENTER FOR

BIRD & EXOTIC ANIMAL MEDICINE

Basic Good Behavior for Birds

Parrots are wonderful companion pets. However, rescue facilities are full of pet parrots that have been abandoned by their owners, many times for unpleasant behaviors that are for the most part preventable.

All pet parrots should be willing to do the following:

1. Step-up and step-down, onto and from: the owner's hand, all members of the household and confident strangers
2. Stay on a perch or play gym when put there
3. Willingly enter the cage or carrier

Stepping-up: Step-up is the first basic command to teach your bird.

1. Confidently ask your bird to step up while pressing gently on the parrot's breast with your hand.
2. Praise the bird.
3. Ask your bird to then step down onto perches, the cage or other surfaces by gently rolling him off your hand.
4. Praise, reward and repeat regularly.
 - All members of the family who are physically and mentally able to handle the bird should regularly reinforce the step up and step down command.
5. The bird should then meet strangers in or outside the home and perform the same for them.

***Notes:** The worst thing you can do is to allow the bird to only step up and step down for a few or worse yet only one person. This can lead to a monogamous pair or sex pair bonding that almost always leads to behaviors most owners find unacceptable. (See "Pair Bonding for Birds")

Perching: Birds must learn to stay on a perch or play gym and not jump up to follow the owners or explore the house.

1. Place the bird on the perch. If he jumps off, give a firm "No" and put him back.
2. When he stays on the perch for a period of time, reward him with a favorite treat.
3. Repeat as necessary. (Be sure a bird left on a perch is rewarded with food, toys, or attention for staying put).
4. If he continues to jump off: place him gently into a large cardboard box for a 2-3 minute "time out."
5. Take him out, place him back on the perch and reward him when he stays.

- Birds should be willing to go back into the cage or carrier when asked

- Practice and continually reward good behavior

- If your bird resists, see "Target Training for Birds"