

# Toys...More Than Just Playthings

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Though toys are often regarded as accessories or peripheral items, toys play a crucial role in the physical and mental well-being of your pet bird. It is not uncommon for caged birds to develop behavioral problems due to a lack of mental and physical stimulation. Toys help create a challenging and diverse environment and are an easy and effective way to prevent many negative behaviors triggered by boredom.

## The effects of boredom

Birds, especially larger species such as African Greys and other parrots, are extremely social and intelligent animals. An active environment is required to keep them healthy and happy. Without sufficient stimulation, many birds become depressed and begin to demonstrate negative or abnormal behaviors such as biting, screaming, and feather picking. In some cases, they may demonstrate neurotic behavior, seeking solace in repetitive, compulsive actions including self-mutilation.

Perhaps partially due to their beautiful and ornamental nature, pet birds are often regarded as "caged" birds that are to be admired from afar. Sadly, many bird owners do not realize their birds require ample interaction outside of the cage. Designate a block of quality time when you can devote your attention to interact and play with your bird outside the cage.

## Create a stimulating environment

Cage time is unavoidable. While you are at work, your pet bird remains caged for 8 to 10 hours each day, but this does not mean her cage time has to be boring. Take steps to make your pet bird's cage as interesting as possible.

Behavior Effect	What kind of toy is best for my bird?
	Each bird will have his own personal preference. Some may like toys that ring or rattle while others prefer chewing toys. Choose the type of toy that engages your bird.

To create an environment that's challenging and engaging, start by considering toys that satisfy your bird's senses. Include toys that are brightly colored, such as vibrant [acrylic toys](#), as well as toys with varying textures and materials, such as [hanging bird toys](#). Toys with [bells or chimes](#) introduce sound and add a new dimension to play.

type of toy that engages your bird the most. However, be sure to select a toy that is appropriately sized for your particular bird to avoid injury.

Make things more challenging and interesting with toys that encourage problem-solving skills. [Puzzle toys](#) are ideal. If your bird needs more motivation, consider "[treat toys](#)" that reward your bird with a tasty treat only after he figures out how to get to the treat.

Remember to choose toys appropriate to your bird's size and temperament. Large birds can break toys that are too small, and smaller birds may become frightened and confused by a too-large toy.

**Small or medium bird toys:** Parakeets, cockatiels, and similar-sized birds do well with wooden, rope toys, and other [Small Assorted Toys](#). For variety, try [Educational Toys](#).

**Larger bird toys:** Larger Birds, with their super-powerful beaks, should not get plastic toys. Birds sized from African Greys to cockatoos do best with durable toys that last, such as [Block Knots](#) or [Four-Way Play Activity Center](#) toys.

**Build your own:** Our [Build Your Own Toys](#) section is perfect if you wish to assemble a toy with your particular pet's personality in mind.

In order for your bird to always be safe, we encourage you to supervise any bird when he has access to a toy.

Variety is the key to a stimulating environment. Just as you enjoy seeing a change in storefront display at your favorite retailer, it is just as important to regularly change the toys in your bird's cage. Rotate toys to keep interest levels high and also to extend the life of each toy. A fun and exciting environment can be easily achieved through the conscious selection of [bird toys](#).

**TIP: Introduce New Toys Slowly**

New toys can be scary. Some birds are wary of new toys and require an adjustment period. If your bird is apprehensive, keep the toy outside of the cage, but within visual range for a few days. Then place the toy on the cage floor for a few more days to allow your bird to investigate the toy. When your bird starts to play with the toy, it is time to hang it.

