

Send Your Bird to the Head of the Class

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Researchers are finding that birds can solve problems by insight, and even learn by example, as do human children. Parrots, for example, can be taught to distinguish colors, shapes, objects, and even people. Here is proof that their capacity for analytical thinking is on the rise:

- **Birds can be very resourceful** - Wild birds have been observed to lay walnuts in the roadway so passing cars will crack them open. Captive cockatoos will clip small sticks of wood, and then use them to scratch various parts of their body. Keep an eye on how your bird uses his toys, ropes, chew sticks, pacifiers, and the like. The items just might be put to new uses.
- **Birds may have exceptional memory** - Wild birds can collect and bury thousands of seeds across hundreds of square miles, then retrieve over 90%. It is thought that these species have developed a specialized portion of their brain to accomplish the task.
- **Birds may display emotions** - Bird owners have long felt they can tell whether their pets are happy or sad, fearful or content. Now, scientists are working to confirm what their owners already know.
- **Birds can take enjoyment in intelligent play** - Have you observed your bird turning somersaults? Or climbing a rope with his beak? Clearly, your bird does many things just for the fun of it. Provided with the right interactive toy, he will also invest hours in play to satisfy his curiosity, and possibly earn intellectual reward. To optimize physical, mental, and emotional health, you need to engage regularly in activities to challenge and stimulate your bird:
- **Flight**- If you have a small bird, you can provide him with a [large cage](#) which affords sufficient space for side-to-side flight.
- **Exercise** - To alleviate boredom and flex muscles, large birds need time out and away from their cage. An out-of-cage [playstand](#), complete with ladders and toys, provides a secure station.
- **Diet** - Variety is critical to nutrition, and also important to the satisfaction of your bird. You can select from an enormous variety of high quality foods, plus fruit and nut treats, to satisfy the palate of even the fussiest bird.
- **Companionship** - The secret to keeping your bird happy is the frequency of attention, not the duration. When your bird tires of the entertaining items you provide, stroke his plumage or play together. After a minute or two, he should be content and ready to return to his stand. Your pet may respond well to your educational efforts. In fact, he may prove to be smarter than you ever thought possible.

In addition to the basics - food, water, shelter, sleep, and social interaction - your bird needs intellectual stimulation, the kind that can only be derived from play and training.