

*The Crystal Parrot Press
Information Series*


15C College Highway
Southampton, MA 01073
(413) 527-2550

Basic Training for All Birds

All birds need to know some basic commands. Not only do these commands help to keep you in charge of your bird, but they help to give your bird the structure, rules and guidelines that allow them to live happily. Without rules and guidelines humans, birds, dogs, cats or any animal would have no any idea how to behave, and what is expected of them. It is our responsibility to give our birds the foundation of good behavior, and teach them how to live with us in our homes. Birds are not domestic animals. We have not bred them through many generations over hundreds of years into animals that “just know” how to behave. We must guide and teach our pet birds how we expect them to act and what correct and incorrect behavior is.

The three basic commands all birds must learn are
“Step up” “Step down” and “No”

“Step Up”



“Step up” should be something all baby parrots learn as they grow up and should be continued for their entire lives. The first of the three basic commands, “step up” is not a request; it should always be followed with a bird stepping up onto a hand, perch, or whatever is offered. It is the owner’s responsibility to guide their bird to understanding that “step up” always means “step up.” It is also the owner’s responsibility to always follow through with their “step up” command every time they say it. Even if the bird is cranky, tired, hormonal, hungry, or just plain angry, “step up” should always be obeyed.

When you use the “step up” command, make sure what you are asking the bird to step up on is in front of them and just above their feet and below their belly. Gently push against the bird’s belly, and encourage them to “step up.” If you need to gently pick up a foot to start them stepping up, do so. You can also use your thumb to hold a foot on your fingers to prevent the bird from stepping off. You can be assertive, but never yell, hit, get angry, or punish your bird.

Don’t try to ask a bird to step down to your hand or perch, or step backward. Stepping onto something below their feet is not natural for a bird. Never ask a bird to sit on your arm; use your hand even for the big birds. Not only is your arm too thick for them to stand on comfortably, but you have no control of the bird. You always want a bird on your hand.