

# BIRD BEHAVIOR DO'S AND DON'TS

## Do's

- 1. Do teach your bird to “step up” and “step down” on command.**
  - This should be practiced for 5 minutes twice daily until learned.
  - Give lots of praise and treats – this should be a fun interaction not Navy Seal training.
  - Practice initially on a T-stand or perch then practice in and around your bird's cage. Aggressive birds should initially be trained to step up and down on a stick.
  - Your bird should be trained well enough to step up and down even when she/he doesn't want to.
- 2. Do reprimand your bird with the “evil eye”.**

When your bird misbehaves:

  1. Glare at him/her with the “evil eye” for a brief moment.
  2. Say “NO” in a stern tone.
  3. “Ladder” your bird from one hand to the other while saying “step up” if your bird is on your hand while misbehaving.
  4. Ignore your bird while misbehaving and reward good behaviors when they occur.

**Example:** Your bird is on your hand and bites you. You respond by giving the “evil eye” while saying “NO” sternly then make your bird step up from one hand to the other for a few moments.

**Example:** Your bird is screaming for attention. You respond by ignoring your bird when screaming and giving praise and treats when playing quietly.
- 3. Do feed a good quality pelleted diet.** Some behavior problems can stem from your bird not feeling well due to malnutrition.
- 4. Do give 10-12 hours of uninterrupted, dark, quiet sleep time at night.** Birds not getting enough sleep will be cranky and more likely to have behavior problems.
- 5. Do give your bird many toys and rotate them on a regular basis.** Mental stimulation helps prevent behavior problems.

## DON'TS

- 1. Do not ever let your bird on your shoulder.**
  - A bird that “shoulders” is dominating the owner. This can lead to biting, aggressive, and disobedient behavior.
  - A bird may bite the owner in the face or ear if startled or if displacing aggression towards the owner. Facial bites may be disfiguring and often require plastic surgery.
- 2. Do not give “drama rewards” for bad behavior.**
  - A “drama reward” is any type of dramatic response (yelling, raising your voice, waving your arms, storming about, crying) to a bird misbehaving.
  - Drama rewards reinforce the bad behavior so that it is more likely to occur again.

**Example:** Your bird bites you and you respond by grabbing your wounded finger and crying out what a “baaaaaaad bird” he is while jumping up and down. Your bird thinks this is great fun and very exciting so bites you again later in hopes of getting a reaction.

**3. Do not do behavioral “quick fixes”.**

- Behavioral “quick fixes” may stop the behavior in the short term but do not resolve the problem in the long run. They also may result in other behavior problems.
- **Quick Fixes include:**
  1. **Grabbing your bird by the beak:** Your bird considers this a sign of war and this will only result in the escalation of the aggression.
  2. **Squirting with a water bottle:** Your bird may develop bathing phobias if water is used as punishment. It also can damage the trust between you and your bird.