

Parrot Toys & Toy Safety

Parrots are extremely intelligent creatures; and toys are one of the most important items we can purchase for our birds. Many avian behaviorists recommend four types of toys for pet birds:

Climbing Toys

Ropes
Swings

Foot Toys

Nuts
Corn-on-the-Cob

Chew Toys

Natural wood branches
Old telephone book
Paper towel rolls

Puzzle Toys

Pine cones with seeds
Dry pasta filled with treats
PVC pipe w/ holes drilled and treats

When purchasing toys, the number one concern is safety. Avoid toys with small, removable parts. Tighten hanging toys securely, and wet the rope or leather first to ensure the knot is tight enough. Other considerations to look out for include:

Size: Toys must be appropriate to the bird's size.

Bells: Clappers on bells should be securely attached.
Remove clappers if the bird is strong enough to remove it (most birds are strong enough) using a pair of pliers.
Large birds should never have access to small bells.
Avoid old bells as they may be made of heavy metals like lead or zinc.

Beads: Plastic beads are fine for small birds, but should never be offered to large birds. Offer wood beads to large birds instead.
Vegetable dye should be used to color beads.
Recommended size of beads:

1-in.	Conure
1.5-in.	Amazon
1.5-in & up	Macaws, cockatoos

Leather: Leather and rawhide in toys should be of domestic origin. Dyes used to color leather can be toxic. Select non-tanned or vegetable tanned leather.

Chains: Chains should be welded smoothly.

Links should be large enough to prevent trapping of a toe.

Rope: Always use a natural fiber (plastic and synthetic fibers can do great harm if ingested or if they wrap around toes or limbs)
Check rope material frequently and remove the rope when it becomes soiled or frayed.
If rope strands unravel, they can become entangled in the toes. (Regular nail trims will minimize this risk).
Also monitor your bird to make sure it does not eat bits of rope.

Clips: Check clips or connector pieces carefully.
Can the bird get its beak or toes caught?
A clip type connector is safe only for small birds.
Most birds require a quick link type connection (round, key-ring style hardware)
Large birds should have tight C-clamps.
Dog-leash style snap hooks or shower curtain type hooks can be dangerous.

Birds like to chew and many toys will be destroyed. This is good! This is the purpose of bird toys. Because their job is to destroy their toys, always inspect your bird's toys on a daily basis. Also supervise your bird with its toys—particularly new toys.

Finally, not all birds interact with toys, and the ability to play may be learned to some degree.

References

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