

9 Essential Playground Rules For Parrots & Their People

Parrots are naturally social: they flock together, preen one another, contact call each other, forage together and, yes, play with each other. If you have a multiple bird household, there are some “Playground Rules” to keep in mind to make sure everyone’s play time is happy and safe:

1. Know your birds. Some birds get along famously from the get go. Others, however, act more like mortal enemies than flockmates. Before allowing your birds to interact, put their cages near each other and look for signs that they are accepting of each other’s presence. Signs that your birds are getting along include: when one starts to preen, the other starts to preen; they appear relaxed --no aggressive body language, such as flared tail feathers or raised head feathers, no lunging -- and they contact call each other. If one bird shows aggressiveness toward another, you might have to set up separate play schedules.

2. Designate a neutral play area. Even birds that get along can be territorial and aggressive around their cages. Create a play area or two, such as a playgym or table top, where your birds know fun toys await them. Areas with defined borders, such as a playgym, playtree or playtop, make it easier to teach your bird physical boundaries. If a large surface such as your bed, coffee table or the floor is your designated play area, place a towel or blanket down to protect your belongings and to teach your birds to stay within the play perimeter.

3. Enforce the timeout rule when applicable. Birds can become overexcited when playing, which can lead to aggression toward another bird or you. If a bird seems riled up to the point that it lunges, growls, attempts to bite or shows similar signs of aggression, return it to its cage for some downtime.

4. Create a play schedule. An established routine ensures that your birds receive their daily dose of out-of-the-cage play time and it gives them something to look forward to. Try 30 minutes early in the day and 30 minutes in the afternoon/evening if possible, or a longer afternoon/evening play session if morning isn’t feasible.

5. Encourage play.

Think of playtime as exercise time — a time when your birds are up and running around. Show your birds how a new toy works, or gently wrestle them with your fingers to get them in a playful mood.



6. Make sure the toys are appropriate for all your birds.

Some toy types are better suited for certain bird species over others. The larger the size discrepancy between your birds, the more likelihood a toy might be inappropriate for one of your birds. If your small green-cheeked conure and your double yellow-headed Amazon are best pals, watch that your Amazon can’t bite off (and potentially swallow) the bell clasp from your conure’s toy.

7. Birds only, please! Locate your dog or cat in a locked off room while your birds enjoy their “playground.” This is especially vital if your birds are timid around your dog or cat: How fun could playing in front of a predator be for your bird?

8. Share the toys. Offer toys that the birds can play with together, such as a finger-trap toy or leather strip to play tug-of-war with, wicker or plastic balls to roll back and forth/chase and swings to sit side by side on.

9. Have fun! Playtime is called playtime for a reason! Follow these playground rules so everyone has a happy play experience.