

Encourage Your Parrot To Talk

Interacting and talking with your parrot will encourage it to communicate with you

By Elise Kaplan

Courtesy Mary Taylor, North Carolina

The more you interact with your bird it will be encouraged to communicate with you.

One question parrot owners hear time and again is, "Does it talk?" Something about hearing an animal speak our language intrigues and enchants us, but many people don't realize that parrots don't just "parrot" without meaning. Often, they speak with meaning and in context. Once a parrot becomes part of your life, you realize that it's that little bird brain behind all the talking that makes the challenge and work of parrot ownership worthwhile.

So how do you acquire a parrot chatterbox? Some species, such as African grey parrots, Eclectus and many Amazon parrots, are known for their talking ability. Quaker parrots, budgies (parakeets) and some of the *Poicephalus* species (such as the red-bellied parrot) can provide a lot of talk in a smaller package. But the fact is no parrot of any species comes with a speech guarantee. First and foremost, bring a parrot into your home to enjoy its company. If it talks, that's just the icing on the cake.

Encouraging Talking

Imagine a planet where aliens keep humans as pets. An alien buys a human, keeps him in the "human room" of the house, provides for all his physical needs, and takes him out for 15 minutes twice a day to teach him to talk, repeating a given phrase over and over with no indication of what it means.

Now think of how we treat human babies. We talk to them all the time about our daily routines, like cooking dinner or folding laundry. We use animated, expressive voices and emphasize key words. "Do you want a cookie? OK, here's a cookie. Do you like that cookie?" Sometimes, we use a higher-pitched voice with a baby than we do with adults, and we keep our sentences simple. We read aloud or sing simple songs.

We don't really understand the mechanism that triggers speech in either human babies or parrots, but it seems that many of the same conditions that babies need also help our parrots communicate. When you bring a parrot into your home, you become its flock.

The more you love it and interact with it, the more it wants to communicate with you. It sounds so simple, but the single best thing you can do to encourage your bird to talk is to interact with it, love it and enjoy it.

Tips To Get Your Bird Talking

Try these tips to encourage your bird to talk. [More>>](#)

Guidelines

Besides socializing your parrot, there are a few things to keep in mind as you encourage it to say its first words.

Be careful what you say around your parrot. Because they enjoy animation and drama, they can sometimes learn words said in anger (or passion!) after hearing them only a few times – and these may be the last things you want your bird to repeat when your mother-in-law is visiting. Also, beware of trendy phrases. "Whazzup?" may seem cute at first, but parrots live a long time. Will you still think it's funny in 20 years?

Expect your bird to start slowly, then gain momentum. You may hear it mumbling before you can make out actual words. Depending on the species and the individual bird, your bird may not speak until a year of age or older.

Most of all, enjoy your parrot. Some people may think it's silly that you give your bird a blow-by-blow description as you fold laundry, read to it from the paper or sing "Old MacDonald" with full parrot sound effects, but you'll be having fun, and so will your little friend – and that's what's important.