

Pet Bird Trick: The Wave

Teach your pet bird to do the wave, a simple fun trick.

By Tani Robar

The wave is an easy trick to teach your pet bird.

Are you ready for your first trick? In the first article, we discussed how to prepare your pet bird for training, such as through socialization and choosing a good reward. Now, we'll start with a simple trick that requires no props.

A verbal and visual cue for each trick keeps the pet bird on track in the beginning, but as soon as the bird learns the cues you are free to drop either one.

The verbal cue for this trick is to simply say "Wave." Place your pet bird on a table, the floor or on a T-stand, and let him get used to being there. Practice having your bird get on and off your hand and to and from the T-stand to give you a chance to reward him and praise him for good behavior.

Hold your bird's treat in your right hand and wiggle the fingers as in a small wave, and say "Wave." Then put your left hand in front of the bird's chest as though you were asking him to step onto it, but do not let him! The minute he starts to lift his left foot to step onto you, withdraw your left hand and praise him immediately. I use the word "Good." Reward him at the same time with the treat in your right hand. (You will be using this immediate praise and reward combination continually from now on, so I will refer to it as simply "P&R.")

You must offer your left hand here, because in a later trick, you will be asking your bird to place his right foot on your right hand in the same way.

Watch carefully for the minute your bird starts to raise his left foot and try to immediately P&R him. It won't take him long to realize that "Hey, all I have to do is raise my left foot slightly, and I get all this attention as well as a treat?"

For some birds, this trick will take only 10 minutes to teach, for others maybe a while longer, but it is an easy first trick and worth teaching.

As soon as your bird seems to have the idea of raising the left foot to the cue, up the anti.

Wait with your P&R just a few seconds longer to see if he won't try and lift his foot just a little higher. Do this each time you ask for the wave, and you will be surprised at how high he will lift his foot just to make sure you see it. Wait a few seconds longer and see if he will finally start to drop the foot. Immediately P&R. What you are working for is an up-and-down motion of his foot like a wave. He will quickly get the idea and you will soon have a genuine wave.

Your bird may add an innovative behavior (one the bird does on its own without training) like opening and closing the toes. Immediately reward innovations. Some of the innovative behaviors become the best tricks because they are so unique. One of my birds lifts her foot so high I decided to make it into a salute instead of a wave. Now I have taught her to raise a flag followed by a salute. Always be on the lookout for such behaviors and be quick to seize on them.

Stop the lesson when the bird has the idea. Don't bore the bird with endless repetitions. Some people claim parrots have short attention spans. They don't if you keep the lesson interesting. A lesson can be anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour and twice a day or twice a week — it is up to you. After the bird has mastered the first trick, move on to something else, but don't have a playtime follow a lesson. Make the lesson itself be his special time with you.

Check out Tani's video: [The Wave](#)
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