

Trick of the Month – Ring Toss

Additional ideas for the ring on the peg trick

By Tani Robar

Now that your bird knows how to put a ring on the peg (BIRD TALK, “FYI,” December 2006), try some of these other fun tricks.

Work with different sized rings

Start mixing up the size of the rings, but not the color. At this time, use rings and pegs of all the same color. You will be surprised at how quickly your bird learns to handle all sizes of rings, from the largest to the smallest. Teach your bird to only retrieve the small rings, or to retrieve the rings in order of smallest to largest. Mix it up! Remember to praise and reward (P&R) after each successful retrieve.

Teaching colors

Next, we'll move on to teaching your bird colors. Continue working with only one color ring and peg. Give your bird the red ring and ask him to put it on the red peg. Say the color you want so that he gets used to hearing a name for a color. Give him no other choice than the red peg. P&R each time he puts the ring on the peg.

When your bird does this color readily, add another color, such as blue. Change the peg positions so the red peg is not always on the right etc. Ask him to put the red ring on the red peg, but ignore the blue peg for now. P&R each time your bird successfully places the red ring on the red peg. Now add a third peg, such as yellow. Continue to focus only on the red ring, ignoring the other two pegs.

When your bird consistently places the red ring on the red ring, add the next colored ring, blue. Go back to the beginning and teach him to place the blue ring onto the blue peg, uses the word “blue” to familiarize him with the name. Give lots of P&R . Repeat this process with each color you add, moving on only when your bird confidently learns the previous color. Only have your bird do one color at a time, so that it really learns the color. Keep changing positions of the pegs. Your bird might seem a bit confused at first, but it will quickly get the idea that each ring belongs to a specific peg. P&R each successful attempt, and help your bird when he needs it by indicating the right colored peg.

Once your bird has mastered all of the colors, place all of the rings on the table with all of the pegs in position. Give him the red ring and see what he does. Help him succeed by placing a hand over the blue ring, or tapping the red base if he needs the help. Give P&R each time he puts the correct color on the matching colored peg. If he seems at all confused, go back to the beginning, working with just one ring and peg,.

Keep rotating the positions of the pegs so he doesn't expect the red peg to always be on the right. This would be learning the trick by position rather than color. Give your bird help when he needs it by subtly indicating the correct color.

Identifying colors

When he seems to understand the connection between each ring and its similarly colored peg, place the rings in a pile and let him select a ring and then place it on its matching peg. P&R each attempt, and help your bird to match the color when necessary. When he can do that readily, you can go to the highest level where you tell him which ring he must pick up and put on a matching peg. To do this, go back a few steps and just ask your bird to bring you the red ring. He doesn't have to put it on a peg, just bring it to your hand, giving P&R when he retrieves the correct color.

After your bird can retrieve a color by name, work on asking your bird to bring you the blue ring, and then the yellow one until he can bring you any ring from a grouping on the table when you ask for it by color. Make sure to give a lot of P&R while working on this trick. This task is more difficult and takes a bit of work and much repetition, but it is something you can keep working on as you teach other tricks.

Finally add all of the pegs and call out which color ring you want your bird to select. He must put it on the matching color peg, and give P&R with each attempt. The end result is quite spectacular and worth the extra effort.

Teaching colors and their names can be the start of more advanced tricks where you ask your bird to bring you various colored items just by asking for the color by name.