

5 Tricks in One

After learning the Retrieve, your bird can complete nearly any trick requiring a prop

By Tani Robar/Photography by Christopher Appoldt

Teaching your bird tricks enriches its environment and challenges its senses. It's also a great way to bond with your bird.

Highly intelligent, nearly all parrots can learn to do a few simple tricks. You will, however, have to find out what motivates your bird — be it food, praise or both. I teach all tricks using the method popularly called “positive reinforcement.” This is a training method in which you immediately reward any behavior you are trying to teach and ignore any wrong moves or bad behaviors. The reward gives your bird a reason to perform and complete the trick you're asking of it.

Most trainers find that food rewards work best. Through trial and error, discover your birds favorite food (safflower seeds, a almond piece, dried papaya, etc.), and only offer it during training. You'll offer the reward (in a piece small enough for your bird to consume in a few seconds) and praise whenever your bird does something correct, even just a part of the trick or a movement toward the prop. This is called P&R (praise and reward).

Find a quiet area, free of distractions, to begin training.

****For the full article, pick up the 2007 issue of Birds USA****