



# PARROT ENRICHMENT

**CREATED BY**





## What is Enrichment?

In the animal world, enrichment means providing the animal with proper stimuli to maximize psychological and physical well-being!

Essentially, keeping your pet engaged, entertained, and busy!

# A **BUSY** BEAK IS A **HAPPY** BEAK

Why is  
Enrichment  
Necessary?

- A bird caretaker's goal is to fight boredom!
- Keeping your bird stimulated and mentally healthy with various types of enrichment is the surest way to **keep your bird happy**.
- **Providing enrichment can minimize problem behaviors** like excessive screaming, biting, or feather destructive and self-mutilation behaviors.

# Natural behaviors

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Enrichment should allow animals to perform natural behaviors: things that they would be doing in the wild. You should research what your parrot would be doing if it were living in a wild flock and attempt to give your birds opportunities to engage in those behaviors.

- Examples- foraging for food, flying, engaging in social behavior
- Various species will have different typical behaviors. For example, Patagonian conures live in burrows and will spend significantly more time on the ground than other species. You may want to give a Patagonian parrot more toys close to the ground and opportunities to dig.





## Fight Birdy Boredom

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- Without toys and other enrichment your bird can become bored. Birds may spend time problem solving how to escape their cages to get out and find their own entertainment. If you do not give your bird appropriate materials to destroy, they may redirect these natural destructive behaviors to damaging your home - including walls, furniture, cabinets, clothing, and any other items in your house that they find interesting!

# Types of Enrichment



**Sensory:** Enrichment that stimulates your bird's senses. Sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

**Cognitive:** Cognitive enrichment is anything that stimulates your bird's mind. Training is one of the best ways to keep your bird cognitively engaged. Training can also be used to teach birds to engage with tactile enrichment to keep them stimulated while you are away. Things like toys and foraging opportunities will keep their minds busy and minimize behavior problems.

**Social:** Parrots are social animals, living in flocks in the wild. Even when parrots in captivity do not tolerate other birds, they still need social interactions. Proper interactions with other parrots can help teach your bird to see you as part of their flock, not as a mate.

**Environmental:** Their surroundings play a vital role in providing stimuli. Their environment can be too stimulating or negatively stimulating and may cause problem behaviors such as excessive screaming and biting.

Most enrichment combines multiple categories. For example, toys are sensory, environmental, and cognitively engaging!



# AUDITORY ENRICHMENT



- Leaving on the radio, cartoons, sounds or other birds can engage your bird in listening. This is called auditory enrichment! Imagine the rainforest – a bird's natural habitat is always full of sound! Auditory enrichment can be helpful when you have to leave the bird alone for short periods of time.



# Recommended Toy Companies!

Here are several companies that make parrot toys which TGF recommends:

- <https://www.superbirdtoystore.com/>
- [https://www.mybirdstore.com/Products-TOYS\\_BY\\_MANUFACTURER.html](https://www.mybirdstore.com/Products-TOYS_BY_MANUFACTURER.html)
- <https://kingscages.com/product-category/bird-toys/>
- <https://www.mysafebirdstore.com/>
- <https://planetpleasures.com/> (depending on which bird you adopt, these toys might not last as long)
- <https://royalavian.com/> (great stainless-steel toys that are safe and made to last, skewers)
- <https://www.greatcompanions.com/>
- <https://www.windycityparrot.com/> (skewers)

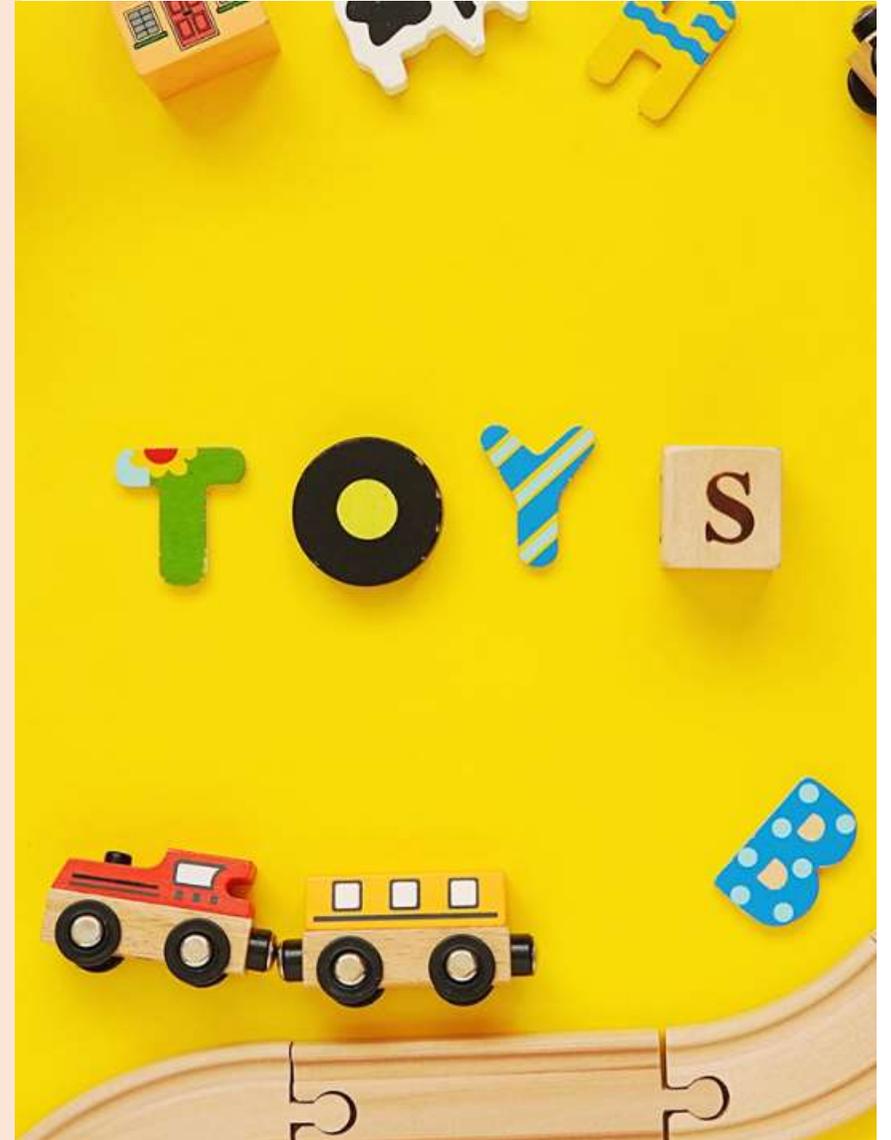


# Making your own bird toys

Buying toys can quickly get expensive, especially if you have a particularly destructive bird. *Fortunately, bird toys are simple and fun to make at home!* You can buy toy parts to string together or make your own if you have the tools to do so.

## Sites for toy parts:

- <https://www.abirdtoy.com/>
- <https://www.noahsarkandnovelty.com/index.html>
- <https://makeyourownbirdtoys.com/>
- <https://www.cabirdnerds.com/>



# Toy Parts

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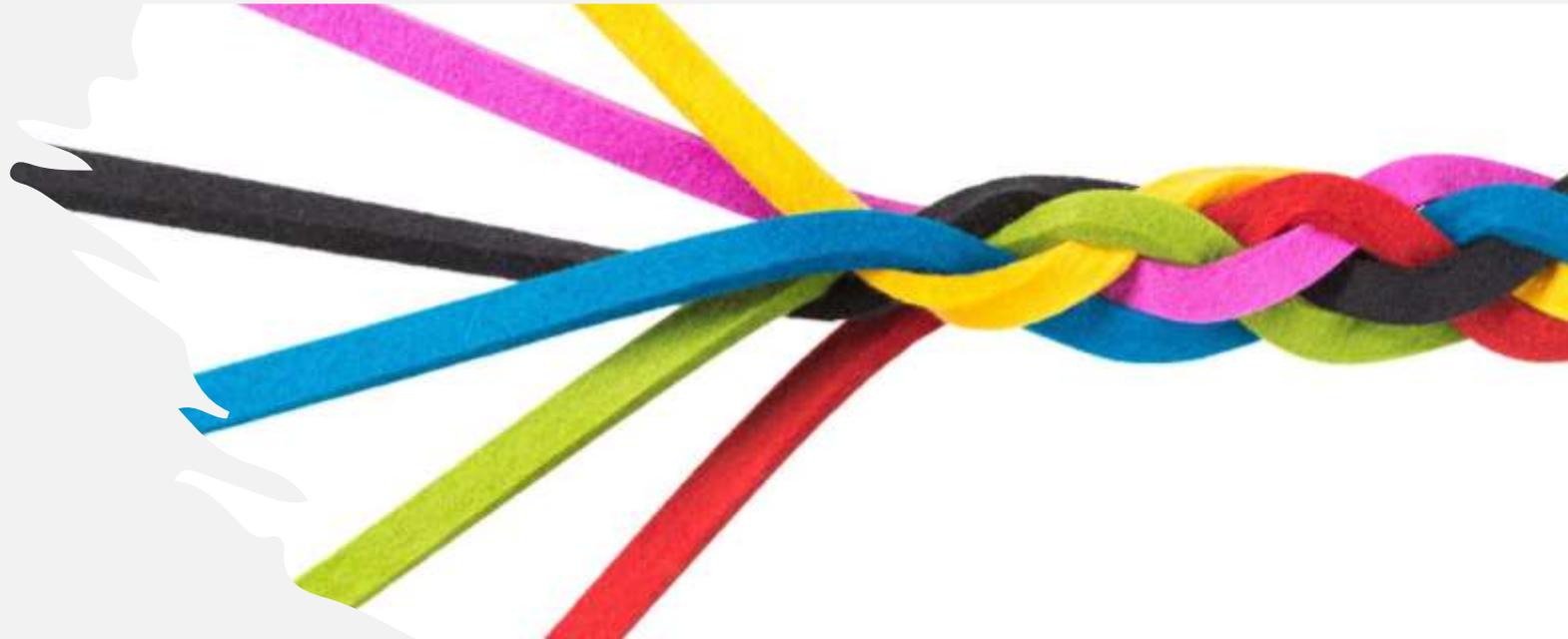
Here is a list of toy parts we commonly use at TGF that are *generally* bird safe:

- Wood (untreated wood blocks, popsicle sticks, tree rounds with bark on)
- Foam (pool noodles, flip flops, play mats)
- Cardboard (corrugated, egg cartons, boxes, cup holders, toilet paper rolls)
- Paper (playing cards, tissue paper, phone books, shredded paper, paper straws, cups)
- Empty plastic containers (coffee containers, pill bottles, juice bottles- ALL WELL WASHED)
- Plastic (beads, building blocks, straws)
- Rubber Kong toys
- Fabrics (fleece, natural untreated leather)
- Metal (spoons, cups, bells. Be very certain the metal is bird safe)

# Structuring Your Own Toys!

To start building your toy, you need to start with something to string the parts onto! Some ideas:

- Rope
- Chain
- Metal skewers



# Hanging toys

- Most toys are hung with quick links. Some birds can undo or break quick links, in which case you should invest in skewers.
- **Using carabiners, key rings, or other fasteners can be dangerous to your bird. Your bird can get a toe or beak caught in these.**



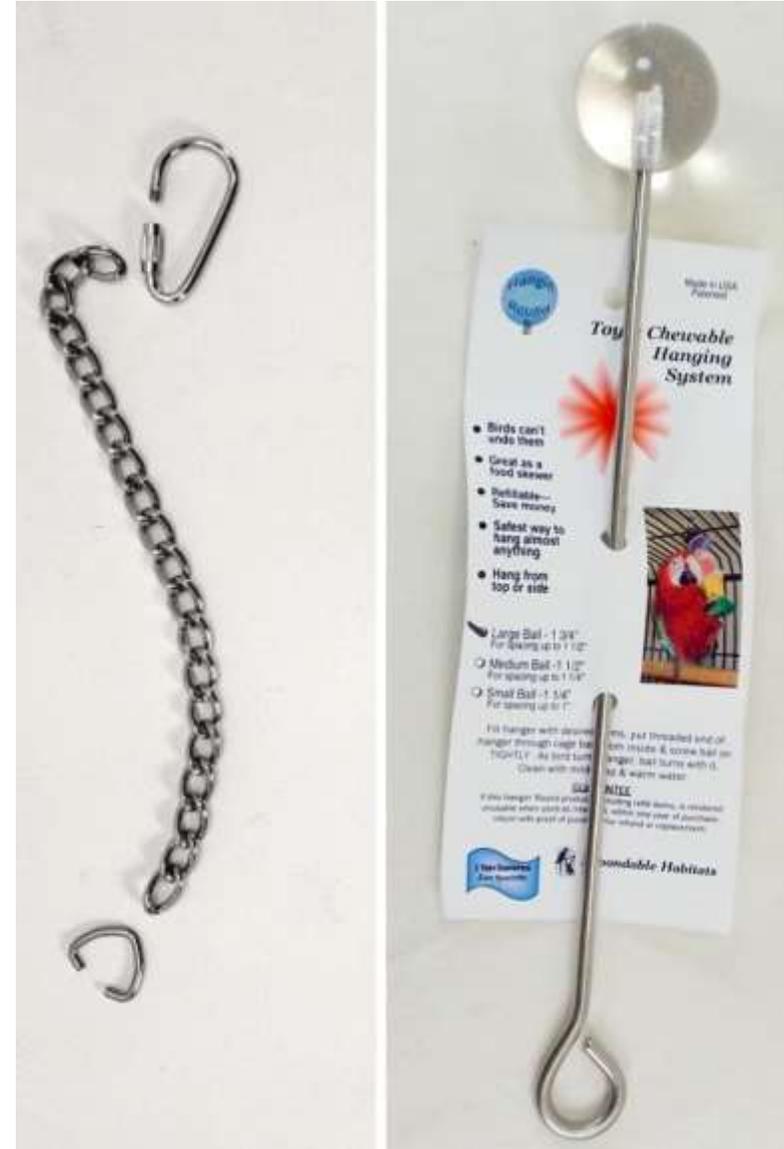
# Structuring Your Own Toys with ROPE

- Rope is a cheap option for stringing toys together, however some birds will simply chew through the rope, dismantling the toy and bringing playtime to a quick end. Rope is also difficult to reuse.
- Shoestrings can be used in place of rope for smaller birds. The toy pictured on the right uses a shoestring!
- Unless you are sure the bird will not chew and ingest pieces, avoid cotton ropes, and treated rope!



# Structuring your own toys - Metal

- Chain can be long lasting and easier to use than rope. The thickness of chain needed will depend on the bird and their habits. Be sure to buy chain that is bird safe. **Stainless steel, wrought iron, nickel-plated, are all safe!** Closed, welded chain is best. It is possible that chrome can contain zinc which can be toxic! It is also best to avoid brass and copper.
- Skewers are long metal rods that you can thread toy pieces on to with a ball that screws onto the end to keep everything secure! Skewers are the easiest to thread pieces onto and are great for birds who like to take their toys down if hung on rope, chain, or quick links.
- Make sure that the chain used on your bird's toys is of good quality. If you have a parrot that likes to mouth the chain, you might consider thicker stainless-steel chain for safety. Stronger birds can destroy weak/thin chains easily.



# Put It All Together!



Materials Used: chains, plastic tubes, rolled cardboard, wood blocks, folded felt, plastic bath toys, plastic gears, scrapbook accessories, plastic straws (cut to curl), foam dice, cardboard tubes, large Legos



# TOY SAFETY 101



- **Remove all loose threads!** Pieces of untied string, long fabric strips, and even short threads from the smallest piece of fabric, if wrapped around a bird's neck, wing or foot, can cause serious injury or even death. Always trim the fraying threads from toys.
- Be aware of parts that your bird can catch its toes or beak in such as small holes in plastic pieces where **a foot or head could get trapped**. Bells that have lightweight clappers, poorly secured clappers, or those that are "jingle"- type can be dangerous for toes and nails.
- Almost anything can be a toy but pay attention to how items are constructed. Toothbrushes, for example, can be given for birds to explore but some can contain metal anchors that can be dangerous.
- Toys made for human babies are not always safe for parrots. Remove small parts that could be easily ingested.





# TOY SAFETY 101

## CONTINUED..



- Keep toys clean and safety-inspected, as your parrot will be continuously exposed to them while destroying them. **Keep in mind that your bird will be touching the toys with their mouth, and you should prevent them from ingesting feces or mold from dirty or damp toys.** You can clean most toy elements by scrubbing them with some soap and water, then rinsing and hanging up to dry.
- If in doubt about the suitability of a toy, don't give it to your bird. You may reach out to TGF with inquiries about whether a toy is safe for your bird!
- New toys can be scary. Slowly introducing new toys can help build your bird's confidence. When introducing a new type of toy, supervise your bird's interaction.
- Birds may exhibit hormonal and nesting behaviors with toys, especially things that create dark spaces like boxes. They may also regurgitate or masturbate on a favorite toy. If you notice this, best to remove the toys that are fueling this.



# Toy Size vs. Size of Bird

When giving your bird new toys, think about the size of the toy and the size of your bird. A macaw could destroy a canary toy in one chomp of the beak! A canary could never begin to play with a toy for a macaw.



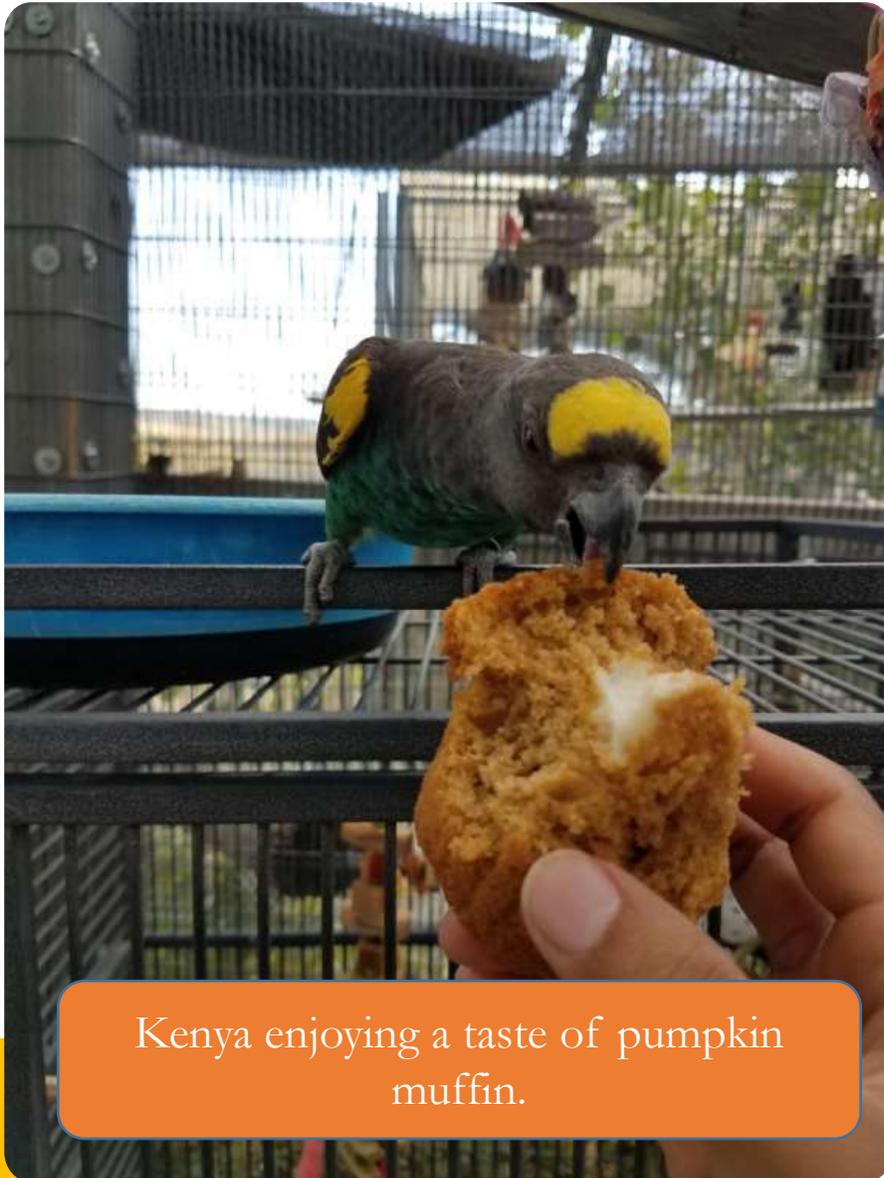
# Recycle!

Toy pieces can be re-used and recycled from half-destroyed toys. Disassemble them and put pieces into a box or "toy chest" for your bird's continued enjoyment, or string them up with new pieces as you are building more toys.



# Other enrichment activities – food & forage

- Playing with food-Eating can be very fun. Using strong spices like cinnamon, cumin, mint and basil in their food will allow them to experience food differently through taste and smell. Frozen or warm (not hot) treats can also be given to stimulate their senses. Sharing people food is a good form of social interaction, but make sure it is bird safe and in moderation.
- Foraging-Foraging opportunities can be given by placing treats in toys or puzzle feeders or placing multiple bowls or bits of food around their cage/stand. When providing foraging make sure to keep track of how much they're eating so you are not under or over feeding. Additionally, keep track of where food is placed and remove it if not eaten to avoid pests or molding/rotting.



Kenya enjoying a taste of pumpkin muffin.

# Other Enrichment Activities

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Training- This is the best way to form a relationship with your parrot. It will also help form behaviors for a more enriched and happy life for both human and parrot. Training is a form of cognitive enrichment!

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Social interaction-**Remember that excessive preening and cuddling is typically reserved for mates** and some birds do not like it. More appropriate interactions are things like dancing, talking, teaching new tricks, and preparing meals together (with safety in mind).

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Bathing-It's not only necessary for the health of their skin and feathers, but bathing can be a highly enjoyable activity. Bathing bowls, shower stands, and spray bottles are commonly used. Remember, a bath is only enriching if your bird enjoys it! Never force a bath!

*Thank you*

We hope you enjoyed our Enrichment presentation!  
Please navigate to our website to complete the enrichment quiz.