

Should I Have a Bird?

Tips for Families Considering a Pet Parrot

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1. **Never give a child a live animal to teach him responsibility** - Children should exhibit quality of character first before a pet is brought into the home. If the relationship between the bird and child does not work out, secure an experienced parrot friendly home will better meet the bird's needs.
2. **Gain consensus from the entire family** - While everyone may not interact with the bird equally, the entire household will need to get along with the bird to a certain extent. Never buy any animal for a child without his or her enthusiasm and the wholehearted approval of all concerned.
3. **Intrigued by the parrot's ability to talk?** - While most parrots can acquire a vocabulary over time, some are uninterested in speaking at all. You'll need to appreciate the non-talker for his other charms, including a virtually limitless curiosity, playful antics and ability to respond to affection.
4. **Consider household members with allergies** - Many parrots have a high degree of natural "dander" which aids them in keeping their feathers clean. If someone in the home has allergy problems, get a physician's opinion before bringing a bird into the home.
5. **Can you afford a parrot?** - Keeping a healthy, happy parrot requires a substantial initial investment and continued expenses, including a spacious cage, a variety of toys, a nutritious diet and regular veterinary care. Determine budget limitations before you're faced with a difficult situation.
6. **Parrots are sensitive creatures** - If you're a young family, it's important to consider future lifestyle changes, like a new baby or career change. Many loving and faithful companion parrots suffer from being passed from one home to another when their owners move away and leave them behind. Think ahead and avoid tragedy.
7. **Look a "gift horse in the mouth"** - While there are many parrots that adjust beautifully to a new home, be wary of a "free" or "bargain" bird, as you may inherit behavior problems that you are not equipped to deal with. Particularly as a first time owner, you'll likely have a better experience by purchasing a young, handfed bird who'll arrive with little, if an, residual "baggage".
8. **Two birds are better than one. Or are they?** - It's commonly said that a single bird makes a better pet, but if your bird will spend a good portion of the day alone, providing the bird with a playmate may be a humane gesture. Some species are better for this than others.
9. **Deal with behavior problems appropriately** - Everyone who will handle the bird should learn proper taming and training principles early in the relationship. If you reach an impasse despite your best efforts, either love and accept the little guy as is, or find an experienced, parrot-friendly home that will better meet his needs.
10. **Expect to have the parrot around a long, long time** - Generally, the larger the parrot, the longer the lifespan, 70 or more years for amazons and macaws, and 8-15 years for smaller psittacines. This is important when you are acquiring a bird "for the kids". When your kids go off to college, odds are "their bird" will become "your bird" for the long haul. Be sure you're ready to accept the challenge.