

# Your Parrot's Cage

By Sharon St. Joan

Every parrot living with people needs a cage. Even if you are nearly always home, and you are able to allow your bird the pleasure of often being out with you, your parrot still needs a cage so that he may have a place to retreat for privacy. Also, he will be safest in his cage when you are out of the house. This doesn't mean that your parrot should spend all his time in a cage. To be happy, your parrot will need several hours outside his cage each day – a minimum of three hours spent with you, and preferably longer.



## What is best for my parrot if I'm gone much of the day?

It is not safe to give your parrot complete freedom to roam your entire house when you're not home. However, that doesn't mean that if you're gone most of the day, your bird needs to stay in her cage.

If you're away a large part of the day, you might consider safety proofing the room or the part of your house where your parrots will be, and that way they won't have to be confined to their cages while you're out.

While it's important to keep your parrot safe, it's just as important that she be happy and healthy, which means she'll need a lot of exercise, and freedom to be out of her cage during much of the day. Safety considerations for your bird need to be balanced with her health and happiness.

## How do I safety-proof a room for a bird?

To safety-proof a room, you'll need to make sure there are no exposed electrical outlets or appliances. There should be effective screens on the windows. The bird room or bird area should be securely closed off from the rest of the house, with any other pets safely located in another area. Also, be aware that any right-side-up containers (such as a drinking glass, a fish tank, a pitcher or a vase), with or without water in them, can be a trap for your bird. Many other objects, like drapery cords, ceiling or other fans, and space heaters, can also be hazardous.

Birds should also be kept away from tobacco smoke, chemical fumes (hairspray, cleaning solutions), household cleaning products, all Teflon-coated materials and plants that may be toxic to birds.

Check the room in the same way you would for a toddler but in this case, keep in mind that the "toddler" may fly, will certainly chew, and will be very curious. The simpler the furnishings of the room are, the easier it will be to safety-proof it.

## What kind of cage should I get for my parrot?

We can't cover here the specific cage dimensions required for every species of parrot. You'll need to read books about your particular parrot species, which will educate you about the particular cage requirements of that species. However, here are some general guidelines for parrot cages:

- Only a cage professionally made specifically for parrots should be used. Homemade cages are not adequate.
- A parrot cage should generally have either a powder-coated finish or be made of stainless steel. Any other painted finish will be toxic if your parrot chews it, and parrots chew everything.
- The bars must *not* be so far apart that your parrot can put her head through them. She can twist her head and become fatally trapped.
- The bars must be sturdy enough so that your parrot cannot bend them or bite through them.
- Generally, a square or rectangular shape, especially at the top of the cage, is better than a dome. A dome provides less space for your bird, and can sometimes have odd angles where a foot or beak can become trapped.
- All other things being equal, the larger a cage is, the better. However, the cage must be an appropriate size for the bird, meaning that the spacing and strength of the bars must be appropriate. Putting a budgie in a cage designed for a macaw will mean that the budgie will get his head through the bars – and maybe the rest of him as well!
- At a minimum, the parrot must have enough space to easily flap his wings, and to climb and move between perches. There should be plenty of space for toys, perches, and treats. The more time a parrot will be confined to his cage, the larger the cage will need to be, but, as mentioned above, every parrot needs at least two to three hours outside his cage every day.
- Most cages have openings for seed and water dishes, so that seed and water can be changed easily from the outside of the cage. This can be particularly useful if a pet sitter cares for the bird while you are away.
- Since parrots are very intelligent, many of them can open their cage doors and sometimes they can open the seed and water dish openings. This problem needs to be addressed immediately by using padlocks or other effective, safe fasteners.
- Every cage must be fitted with appropriate toys, perches, and dishes.

## What do I need to know about a used cage?

First, if your cage belonged to a different bird than the one you now have, what happened to the other bird? Did the other bird have a contagious illness? If you have no knowledge of the other bird, it is much safer not to use the cage. If you feel certain that the cage is safe, and you wish to use it, then disinfect it first. Since many disinfectants are toxic to birds, use only solutions that are specifically formulated for birds (available at bird specialty stores). The cage should be allowed to air dry thoroughly before placing the bird in it.

If your cage is not new, check it very carefully. It must meet all the requirements mentioned above. In addition, there should be no rust, no bent or twisted bars, no bars or joints that seem to be coming apart and are not secure, and no missing bars. Inspect the seams and joints very carefully. Any insecure places may allow a toe or beak to be caught – or the parrot's head. Make sure the cage has not been mended with extra wire or another material that the bird could get caught on. Check the bottom of the cage. Is it secure? Does it come apart if you pick the cage up from the top? Are there holes or rust in the metal of the tray?

Even if your parrot arrived with a cage that she has lived in for some time, that does not guarantee the cage is either safe or appropriate. Examine it carefully in relation to the above guidelines. If the cage is not safe, you will need to get a new one immediately – to prevent an accident from happening.

Remember, your bird's cage is her house, and it needs to be completely safe and large enough to be a home where she feels comfortable.

For more information on parrots and parrot care, visit the Avian Welfare Coalition website at [www.avianwelfare.org](http://www.avianwelfare.org).

*Sharon St. Joan established Feathered Friends at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary and has cared for birds and wildlife for over 15 years. She now devotes her time to writing about birds and wildlife-related issues.*

See also: [Where Your Parrot Should Live](#)