

## Toy Safety

Category: Companion Parrot Toys, Cages and Foraging

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When in doubt take it out. Parrot toys and safety are one of those conversations that can divide camps and cause a lot of frustration because one parent has an accident or incident while some one else and their bird has had that same toy forever and have never had any trouble. Which is why toys are like parrots and the lifestyles around them; they are all different in different situations and can not be line-itemed into categories of safe or not safe.

But make no mistake, any toy no matter the design, can be dangerous because the potential exists for a parrot to do something completely ridiculous with a toy that was never expected or anticipated. Much like human kids, you just don't know what they are going to do with anything. You have to keep an eye on things and them.

So let's talk about how we can make toys safer, rather than searching out just safe toys. Because one toy may be safe for your bird and their type of play, but would be unsafe in my flock. It's a very personal thing. So keep that thought in mind as we move through this discussion.

Ropes, hemp, twine and such have an excellent purpose in good toys, perches, boings and swings. Things can get a bit dicey if after time your parrot has realized they can chew this material up and down leaving strings, knots, and openings that may be dangerous under certain conditions. So keep an eye on all your ropes and twines and those items made from that material. We have cotton rope perches and swings and a boing in our home. No bird has yet realized they can chew these or should. I check every night to see if some birds have figured out this possible chewing event. So far so good. But if the day should arise when one of these items presents itself as a chew toy, I will remove them permanently. Because you can't go backwards in a parrot's chewing history.

What of skewers and stainless steel toy baskets that are intended for foraging out toys and foods? They seem benign enough, but at times I've seen examples of parrots getting themselves in the silliest positions with these, rather stuck needing a bit of assistance. Stainless Steel is 100% safe for parrots, yet there have been a few who were endangered by getting stuck. So there is an example of how the best intended material and design fails the best intentions of a playing parrot.

I personally do not believe any parrot toy is 100% safe. I do believe by consistent inspections and removal of toys that have been changed through play or chewing we can alleviate a large percentage of issues. And it also requires a serious honesty about your parrot's preferred state of mind playing. Some birds are so content not to destroy things while others are driven to obsession to dismantle the world. These two personality examples are why one toy intended and designed for a specific parrot type will only work for the one mindset, not the one parrot type. Butters and Snickers are such a great example of this point. Two macaws with two completely different ways of looking at toys and play. I can not give them the same toys at all. If Snickers should get into Butters cage for any length of toy play he will destroy whatever he gets his beak on. Butters inside Snickers cage is a polar opposite. She is only about inspection and investigation. Her chew drive is only attached to wood blocks, all else is sincerely manhandled but not damaged. I would never leave Snickers in Butters cage alone. He would get into all kinds of trouble.

Toys are as safe as we as the parents make them through action, inspection and appropriate personality application. But that still leaves the one point we all have to acknowledge, there will be incidents. There is no way of making a parrot and their environment 100% safe. That would require an empty cage and a bored parrot. It's about balance, awareness and a parental insight. As usual, the responsibility requires proactive action, much like any other aspect of creating a successful companion parrot lifestyle.

In the end, all we can do is our best and when in doubt, take it out.

***Together we can give every parrot everywhere, a happy home!***

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