



Two of the most common birds adopted from the Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) are budgies and cockatiels. This guide will introduce some basics for providing an enriching environment that will help keep your feathered friend happy by meeting their physical and mental needs.

Note: Although this guide was made for both Budgies and Cockatiels, they are not the same kind of bird. Each has different husbandry and medical requirements and may not always be suited to live together in a single cage. Please consult with your vet for individual animal care recommendations.

Selecting A Bird Enclosure/Cage:

Here are the top four things to consider when house shopping for your feathered friend:

- **Size:** Larger is better as a rule. Birds need space on all sides to stretch, fly, and hop around, as well as need a good amount of room for all their accessories, such as feeding bowls, perches, and toys. At minimum, the cage should be twice the full length and width of your bird. If you have more than one bird in a single enclosure, you must account for their size as well and select a larger cage that would allow both birds enough space to separate.

Quick Tip: If your bird has long tail feathers, they should be able to move around the cage without the tail feathers touching the bars.

- **Materials:** The cage should be made of non-toxic materials which can be easily cleaned and sterilized. Look for enclosures made of non-toxic metals, stainless steel, plastic, and acrylic. Ensure the cage is not made of wood, other easily destroyed materials, or metal cages that can rust or contain traces of materials causing poisoning (e.g. iron, lead, zinc or galvanized metal).
- **Bar spacing:** 1/2 inch spacing is recommended for budgies, and 1/2 inch to 5/8 inch for cockatiel enclosures. Your bird's head should not be able to fit between them, but it should allow enough space for their feet to move through. Horizontal bars will also allow birds to climb.
- **Shape:** Rectangular shaped cages give more room to fly, corners for birds to hide in (if they are feeling fearful) and are usually easier to clean. Round cages are harder to clean, and not recommended because of the pinching hazards to nails, beaks, or feathers at the top where the spacing between bars becomes narrower.

Inside the Enclosure

Making the space inside their enclosure comfortable and enriching will give your bird plenty to sing about. Here are a few things to consider when setting up and decorating inside your bird's enclosure:



- **Layout:** Set up your bird's cage to encourage as much movement as possible by having a variety of activities in different locations. When placing items, try to place them on the sides so your bird can move or fly more freely in the center.
- **Perches:** Having different kinds of perches available at different heights throughout the cage adds a great variety for your birds. Place perches in areas where it creates the least disruption to flying. Avoid placing them directly above other perches, food, or water.
 - Each perch should be wide enough so that your bird's front and back toes don't overlap when seated. Another general rule is that birds should be able to easily wrap well over half or approximately three-quarters of their clawed feet around the perch to sit safely.
 - Cement and sandpaper perches can cause abrasions on feet and infections if used too often, so mix up your perch options and consult with your vet to make sure your bird's feet are doing ok. If you do use cement, concrete, or sandpaper perches, it's advised to place them in areas where your bird doesn't spend a lot of time and to use them sparingly with only one or two in each enclosure.
 - Throughout the cage, use perches made of rope, wood, and plastic in various diameters and textures. This will give your bird's feet more exercise. Materials like wood can also provide entertainment for birds who like to chew.

Bird Beware: When using perches made of materials that can be chewed, like wood or rope, make sure to use animal-safe products intended for birds to reduce risk to unknown chemicals and ensure that they're stable and without frays, which could tangle your bird's feet.

- **Feeders:** Feeders for water, seed/pellets, and fresh food should be made of durable, easy-to-clean materials and are suggested to come in bowl form. Stainless steel bowls are a good choice because they are resistant to scratches (where bacteria can grow) and easy to disinfect.
- **Cage-bottom liners:** Most cages will come with grates which prevent your bird from touching the bottom floor of their cage. Underneath the grate there are different kinds of substrates you can use to collect debris and droppings. Newspaper or old flyers are the most economic and useful, allowing you to clearly see your bird's droppings and monitor their health.

Selecting the Location

It can be helpful to keep in mind that birds are a prey species, which means they are used to being hunted in nature. You can help them feel secure by selecting the right space in your home for their cage.

Whenever possible, always place your bird's enclosure **up high and on a stable base** to give your bird a good vantage point and help prevent accidents from the cage being bumped into. When placing



your bird's cage, check the surroundings to make sure that there aren't things like wires, cords, or other items that can be reached through the bars and possibly chewed on.

Having your bird enclosure **against a wall adds both stability and a sense of security** for your pet. If you have other animals in the home or a busy household which could cause stress to your bird, try keeping the enclosure in a secure room or area of the home where the other animals do not have regular access, or access can be limited to reduce exposure for your bird.

Birds have sensitive respiratory systems and toxins in the air or held on surfaces like fabrics or walls can seriously impact them. **Avoid placing the cage near the kitchen, garage, or other spaces where they are likely to inhale noxious fumes.** Birds can also be very sensitive to temperature. Be mindful of changes in temperature by placing them away from heating units or doors that can bring in drafts or extreme temperatures. Also try to provide natural light in the room they are in without placing them in direct sunlight.

Placing your bird's enclosure in a room with a shaded window and moderate level of activity will allow them to watch the action, provide them with stimulation, and give you extra opportunities to say hello and interact with your feathered friend.

Covering the Cage

If your bird is fearful, covering a corner of the cage can help them relax and feel more secure. It's a good idea to move your birds to a quiet space for sleep, but if that's not possible, then covering the cage at night can also help them rest. Be aware that if covering the cage will cause the bird to become too warm or risk over-heating, it is not advised.

Cleaning

Keeping your bird's environment clean and safe will require routine maintenance. Be sure to disinfect and thoroughly clean areas where bacteria can grow, such as corners and the underside of toys. Before returning items to the enclosure, be sure they are rinsed of any residue and dry.

Suggested Bird Cage Cleaning Schedule:

Daily	Weekly
Clean food and water dishes, bird bath and change cage-bottom liner	Clean entire cage, toys, and perches with disinfectant
Replace water and food twice daily	Switch up toys and perches to give your bird variety and enrichment

It is also recommended to spot clean areas like dirty perches and toys whenever you notice a mess.



Small Animal Behaviour Guide Budgie & Cockatiel Housing



Additional Resources:

For great enrichment you can make for your bird, check out our free Small Animal Enrichment activities by visiting our Connect with Pets page and learn **How to Build a Bird Foraging Box:**

<https://www.edmontonhumanesociety.com/humane-education/>

Looking for additional resources for your bird or other pets in your home? Please visit our website and check out our Behavioural Resources page here:

<https://www.edmontonhumanesociety.com/what-we-do/education-training/behaviour-resources/>

Did You Know?

You can also ask us general behaviour questions by emailing:

askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com

It takes approximately \$7 million to keep the Edmonton Humane Society operational for one year and 40% of these funds come from generous donations made by supporters like you. Please [Donate](#).