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## Birdy Boredom be Gone!

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Your bird is bored! How can you tell? It may pluck, bite, screech, or sit dumbly in the corner of its cage. A bored bird is generally an unhappy bird, which can lead to a number of behavioral and health issues for our feathered friends. In the wild, birds have plenty to keep them busy between watching for predators, gathering food, finding a mate, migrating with its flock, building a nest, and caring for its young. Our companion birds are not so fortunate to have all the natural stimulations

and associated learned survival skills that wild birds do. Here are some ideas for entertaining your companion birds while you're at home or while you are gone during the day, to spice things up for them in their modified habitat.

### At home:

1. Provide them a roomy cage in a safe environment – the more room to roam and even fly gives them something to do and is also good exercise.
2. Let them out of the cage if it is safe to do so. My cockatiels love to walk on the floor, under furniture, and into closets. Just make sure you supervise these out-of-cage events and also bird-proof any hazardous areas.
3. Give them water "sprints" in their travel cage or take a shower with them if they like it. My birds love to be put out in the rain in their travel cage for a few minutes - it provides them entertainment and also allows them to clean and preen afterwards.
4. Put out a pie plate or similar flat-bottomed dish and fill it with lukewarm water so they can use it like a "pool". Make sure it's not too deep. My cockatiels love to play in a pie dish and then preen after. It helps clean their toes, beaks and under their body.
5. Take them out on the deck while you have lunch – in their travel cage of course!
6. Let them help you fold laundry – I "dump" my clean laundry on the floor and the birds love to crawl over it and chew on fringes of napkins and bedspreads while I fold the pile.
7. Every so often let them play in paper boxes or paper bags (no dye) *in moderation*. (Too much box time can lead to nesting and territorial behavior.)
8. Give them clean, bird-safe woods and grasses to chew on, and branches to climb.
9. Let them play on your bed while you read or watch TV.
10. Crunch up some whole grain crackers or tortilla chips and sprinkle them on the floor. Ground-feeding birds like tiels love that!



### While away:

1. Play music from the radio or have the TV on. I also have a sound machine and leave the "tropical rainforest" channel on - my cockatiels seem to like that.
2. Provide them plenty of toys and vary them in the position in their cage over the course of a week or so.
3. Move their cage to a different spot in front of a window every so often - make sure they are not in direct sun and have some shade to get to.

4. Provide clean sticks and grasses for them to chew on. Bamboo, asparagus fern, bottlebrush, and willow are fun ones for them to pick and chew on.

The more time you spend with your bird, the more you'll see what stimulates it and what "toys" and activities it prefers. Think like a bird and you'll have fun coming up with your own unique ideas for your feathered friend.