

Things to Consider Before Buying a Bird: Time Commitment, Cost, and Housing

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Birds can be wonderful pets. They can bring years of enjoyment into a home. However, owning a bird takes no less responsibility than owning a dog or a cat. Make sure you take the time to do your homework and research the species you want before you get one. Start by making a list of reasons you want a bird and a list of traits that are important to you. Compare species of birds to narrow down your list to a few that make the grade. Several questions to take into consideration include the following:

- Why do you want a bird? As a pet for the children? As a companion to you or to another bird?
- How old are the children in the family? If your preteen or teenager wants a bird, who gets the bird when they go off to college?
- Where will the bird stay? Indoors? Living room? Outdoors in an aviary?
- Do you want to teach your bird to talk? How much noise is acceptable to you, the family, and the neighbors? Some species are naturally quieter; others can scream and screech.
- How much time are you willing to commit to the bird on a daily basis? Half an hour a day is needed just for daily feeding and cleaning. What about playtime and socialization? These are essential.
- How long do you want the bird? Finches live about four years; Budgies, nine years; Cockatoos, forty years; an Amazon or African Grey, up to fifty or more years. Make sure you plan for the bird's entire life. This means including for the bird's future care in your will.
- How much are you willing to spend for up-front costs such as purchase price and the cage and accessories? Prices range from several dollars for a small Finch or Budgerigar to several thousand dollars for a Hyacinth Macaw.
- How much are you willing to spend on food, veterinary care, and toys?
- Who will watch the bird while you are on vacation with the family? Some birds do well at boarding facilities while others are much better at home and require someone to come in and care for them.
- Where will you buy the bird? Breeder? Pet shop? Individual that no longer wants or can keep a bird?
- How many birds do you want? Some birds do well alone with enough human attention. Others are much happier with others of their own kind to socialize and live with.

Health is a big consideration in getting a bird. They can carry diseases that can infect other birds in the house and possibly humans also. Learn what a healthy bird should look like and how she should act. Take your new bird to an avian veterinarian within a day or so of purchase for a check up.

If you have a preference for male or female, remember it may be difficult to tell the difference in some species. If breeding the bird is in the plans for the future, DNA testing or surgical sexing is available at some veterinary clinics.

These questions should just be the start of the consideration process. Birds are intelligent, amazing animals that deserve a long, healthy, happy life. If you determine one will fit in with your lifestyle, enjoy your new feathered friend.