

PERCHES

When a bird is not flying, it is standing. It is rare to see a bird lying down or sitting. Perches are therefore **very** important. They are used for standing, rubbing and cleaning beaks, chewing and entertainment. They must be of varying sizes and provide the opportunity for the bird to grip or grasp the perch, not just stand on it with open feet. If they are startled, birds are less likely to slip off or fall from perches that they are able to grasp tightly. Varying sized perches provide better exercise for the bird's feet and the choice of what is comfortable for the individual bird. Birds can get sore feet if the perch diameter is the same all the time.

What are the best types of perches to use?

Give your bird a perch it can destroy! It's a normal behavior, that's enjoyable and beneficial. Perches must be considered a disposable item.



Wooden dowels from a pet store tend to be all the same uniform sizes. Consider gathering your own perches from the back yard, a local park or the forest.

Natural branches from non-toxic trees (see list below) make great, affordable perches. They provide a completely natural surface for the bird's feet and can provide hours of chewing fun. Scrub and clean the branch with a detergent and rinse well. Allow them to dry in the sun or bake for 30 minutes in the oven at 200F (do **NOT** leave unattended in oven). Leave the bark on for texture and chewing.

Ropes, such as hemp or untreated cotton, make great perches. They provide varying foot texture for grip, natural swing or motion and are great to chew on. When they get dirty, they can be cleaned in the washing machine or dishwasher. As the bird uses and abuses the rope it may get frayed or "stringy" and tattered. Throw it out at this point so the bird does not get its toes caught or swallow the loose fibers.

Birds should have one **ceramic or cement** perch amongst their various perches to aid in safely wearing the beak and nails down. If they are the only perch or they are used too frequently, cement or ceramic perches may cause excessive wearing of the beak. If the ceramic perch is placed in front of the food bowl, the bird will visit it, stand on it, clean its beak on it and then leave.

Do *not* use sandpaper perch covers as they do not keep the nails short and could cause terrible sores on the bottom of the feet.

Plastic perches are sturdy and easy to clean BUT some are so hard that they are almost indestructible.

Birds love to chew. Therefore give them something to chew. PVC can be chewed but may not be appropriate if swallowed. Some plastics are very slippery, give your bird good texture

How often should I clean the perch?

The correct answer is every time it is dirty. The perch may get food or feces on it during the course of a day. No animal should have to walk on its own excrement or dirt. Wash the perches with a good detergent or disinfectant with plenty of warm water and scrubbing. REMEMBER – rinse then very well.

What are some safe trees for perches?

Citrus (all)	Dogwood	Papaya
Almond	Elm	Peach
Apple	Fir	Pear
Apricot	Grape vines	Pine (not with stick sap)
Arbutus	Guava	Plum
Ash	Hawthorn	Poplar
Beech	Larch	Prune
Birch	Magnolia	Thurlo
Cactus Wood	Madrona	Vine Maple
Cottonwood	Mansanita	Willow
Crab Apple	Mulberry	

This client information sheet is based on material written by Rick Axelson, DVM & Shawn Messonnier, DVM

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