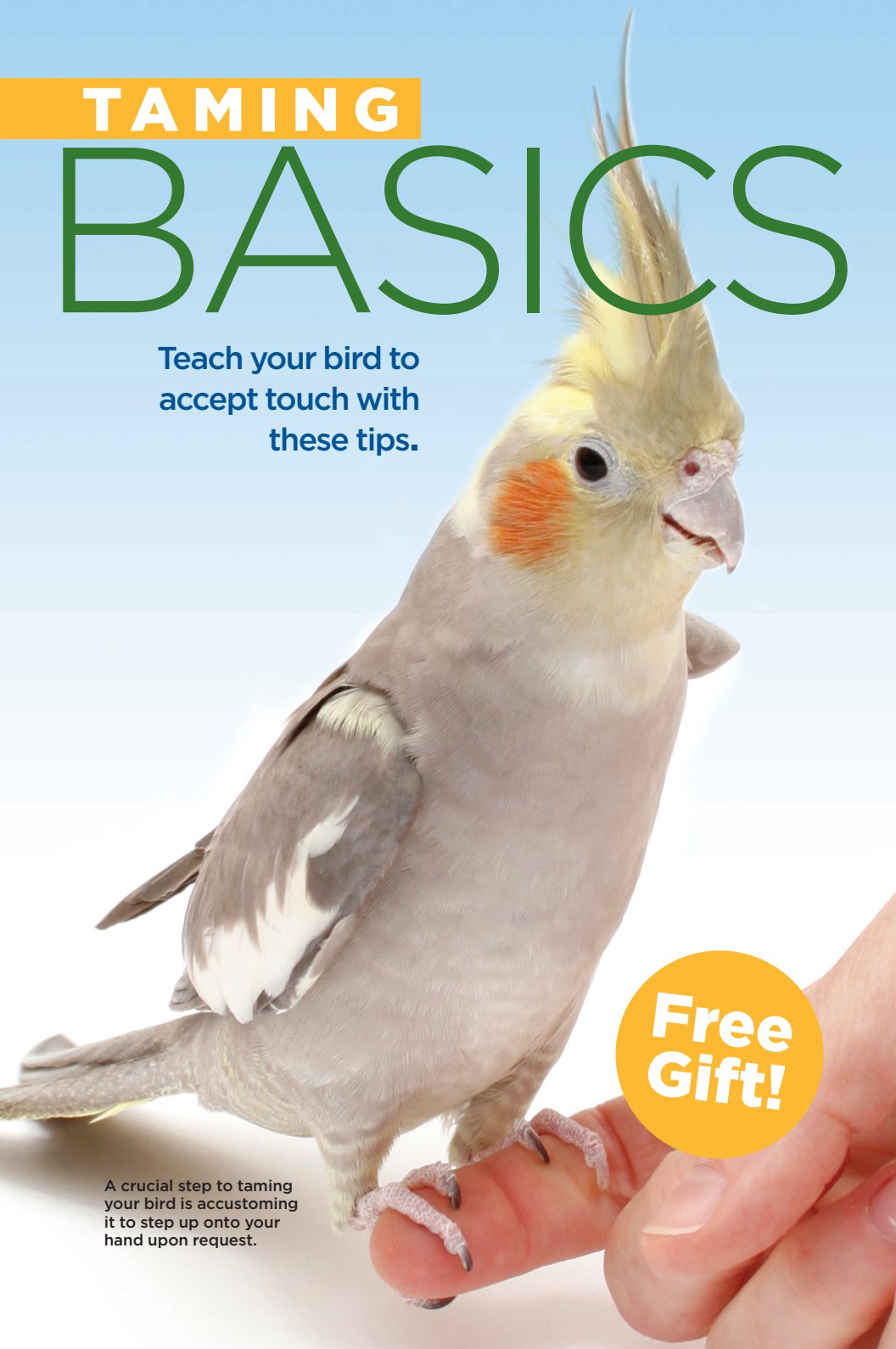


# TAMING BASICS

Teach your bird to accept touch with these tips.




**Free  
Gift!**

A crucial step to taming your bird is accustoming it to step up onto your hand upon request.

# BASICS

**W**hen we bring a companion bird into our lives, we hope to foster a relationship of mutual respect. For the person, that oftentimes means accustoming the bird to step up onto a hand and/or for the bird to allow some gentle petting. For the bird, this means knowing that there will be no forced interaction. Trust-building must be earned by way of patience, dedication and respect on the owner's part. Here are some tips and tricks to winning your bird's trust.

A close-up photograph of a cockatiel bird perched on a person's hand. The bird is facing right, with its head tilted down to eat a pile of small, light-colored seeds held in the person's palm. The bird has a grey body, white wings with dark spots, and a distinctive yellow crest with a red-orange patch on its cheek. The person's hand is visible, with the palm facing up, holding the seeds. The background is plain white.

Find out what  
your bird's  
favorite treat is,  
and offer it by  
hand.

# TIPS

**1. GO SLOWLY.** The taming process should show your bird that you are not a threat but instead a positive part of its life. It begins with indirect trust-building interactions, such as accustoming your bird to your presence (sitting by the bird's cage while you read or surf the Internet) or dropping a treat in the bird's bowl when you pass by, so that your bird views you as the provider of something good.

If your bird demonstrates fearful body language, such as retreating to the back of the cage or slicking down its feathers and opening its beak when you approach, back off. This shows your bird that you respect what your bird is telling you through its body language. By forcing interaction you risk the bird resorting to biting you, which, in turn, teaches the bird that biting is the best way to get you out of its space.

**2. KEEP IT SHORT.** Taming sessions should be short at first, such as 5 to 10 minutes at a time. Always respect your bird's body language.

**3. FIND A GOOD LOCATION.** Conduct training sessions away from your bird's cage, preferably in a small, quiet area without distractions, such as a guest bedroom or bathroom. (Make sure the toilet lid is down to prevent injury should your bird startle.) The smaller space makes retrieving your bird much easier if it flutters

Every interaction with a new pet bird is a training session. Whenever you give your bird a treat, talk to it or scratch its head, you essentially train the bird on how to interact with you.



away from you during your training session. Allow your bird time to settle down.

**4. CUE YOUR BIRD.** Give it a verbal cue, such as "Step up" and move your finger in under the lower part of its chest. Once your bird steps up, offer praise, such as "Good bird." Keep initial training sessions short and don't overstress your bird by chasing it around the room.

**5. KEEP IT POSITIVE.** Make all interactions with your bird positive experiences. Go off of your bird's comfort level, and don't undermine all your hard work and patience by yelling or grabbing at it. Your effort will pay off with a feathered companion that enjoys spending time with you.

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It can be frustrating to want to have a good relationship with your bird, yet your bird is reluctant to trust you or is unused to human interaction. Learn the signs of a fearful bird and discover the solutions to winning your bird's trust.

### FEARFUL BIRD SIGNS:

1. Bird goes to the back of the cage when you reach for it.
2. Bird hisses at you and lunges when you request a Step up.
3. Bird tries to fly away from you.

### FEARFUL BIRD SOLUTIONS:

1. Get it used to your presence by sitting near its cage while you do a quiet activity, such as reading a book or magazine.
2. Drop your bird's favorite treat in its food dish when you walk by.
3. Talk or whistle to your bird while it's in its cage.
4. Once your bird seems comfortable with your presence, open its cage and allow it to come out of the cage on its own. Talk and or whistle to your bird while it sits

on top of its cage or playgym, or offer a favorite treat in your open hand.

5. Take your bird into a small, quiet room and practice having it step up onto your hand.
6. Offer verbal praise or a favorite treat when your bird steps up onto your hand.

One way to accustom your cockatiel to being petted is to gently blow on its head feathers while it perches on your finger. Try this for a few sessions and then gently rub your finger over its head feathers as you blow on them. Your chances of success are better if you do this during your bird's molting period (evident by visible pin feathers).



# BIRDTALK®

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