

Meet-and-Greet Instructions

Thank you so very much for participating in this project. Here are step-by-step instructions and links to videos and forms to use throughout the project.

Information & Cautions

In this project, we are investigating how birds might respond to meeting with “friends.” Initially we will observe their progress through “meet-and-greet” sessions associated with ringing a bell, and finally, we will see whether the birds select to “call their friends” when given agency to do so themselves.

For the study, we don’t want to force the bird to do anything! Make sure to always be aware of your bird body language to be able to slow down, or stop the interaction any time your bird becomes uncomfortable.

Some behaviors to be aware of: It is important that the birds are primarily comfortable throughout this process. While birds are often neophobic (nervous about new things), there are particular behaviors that may trigger more immediate responses.

- Behavior that is unsafe for caregivers
- Lunging at the screen – more than 3 minutes
- Extreme fear reactions (i.e., quick movement/flight away from tablet and unwillingness to return)

If any of those arise, contact us at parrotstudy@media.mit.edu and we will guide you through next steps!

Tablet settings:

- Luminosity: Please set the tablet luminosity at 75% and keep them consistent throughout the project.
- Audio: Initially, audio should be set at mute (lowest level). Once the bird has demonstrated primarily comfort behavior for a duration of 3 minutes, begin to increase audio in increments of 2 presses per introduction/”meet-and-greet” session, until it reaches 60% volume.
- Messenger Kids: We will be using Messenger Kids for the calls

Human behavior during parrot-parrot sessions:

- Remember to record all training and interaction sessions (start recording by saying your bird name, date and time)
- Provide treat reinforcers for symbol-learning but not for bird-bird interactive calls
- Please make sure to always be present and observing when your bird is using the system. Your bird may also prefer reassurance and your close presence during the interactions, and that is ok.

- During the introduction and initial meet-and-greet session, you will be holding the tablet, so you can adjust the distance to the bird as needed to ensure they don't experience fear. Be sure to stabilize the tablet as much as possible, as dropping or adjusting the tablet during the call can create stress for parrots.

Interaction Space Setup

- The bird should be able to approach and withdraw as is comfortable to them.
- Consider placing an item in proximity behind which the bird can hide
- You will begin by holding the tablet so you can provide more/less space based on comfort behavior, but ultimately the tablet will be located such that the birds can touch and interact with it on a stand.

Recording Intro

- Right after pressing the recording button, please state your name, the bird's name, the date, the time, who they are interacting with and the interaction # (as applicable) at the beginning of each recording

“Meet-and-Greet” Script

1) Callee Script (two sessions per friend)

- Coordinate with the other bird parent to ensure that they are available and ready
- Turn on the camera/recording device to record.
- State date, time, and your bird name
- When someone is calling your bird, say *“Oh, our friend <name> is calling us! Are you ready?”* and hold the tablet at a distance such that it does not cause a fear reaction.
- When visual contact is made, observe your bird’s reactions.
 - **Comfort:** Leaning toward or calm and watching, soft feathers, dancing or excitement
 - As long as comfort behavior maintains, slowly bring the screen closer until it settles around 18” away for large birds and 10” for small birds.
 - **Aggressive:** The bird postures aggressively or lunges at the screen
 - As long as you are safe and the screen is protected, allow visibility for up to 3 minutes and observe whether behavior settles into comfort (let’s discuss further). If aggression continues, close the session and say, *“You looked mad. Let’s do something to help you feel better.”* Then engage in hands-free, movement-oriented activity (dance, look at target fun).
 - **Fear:** If large fear reactions occur (a flight across the room and refusal to come down, shaking, darting eyes, posturing to fly and pacing) – close the session and say, *“You looked afraid. Let’s do something to help you feel better.”* Then engage in book enrichment/target training/something else trust building.
 - Maintain a distance between the screen and the parrot such that the parrot is in “interested/aware” mode, but not exhibiting fear responses (this could be up to 9 feet). The parrot should either return to “Calm” behavior or comfort behavior – leaning toward the screen. When the parrot is calm/demonstrating comfort behavior and leaning toward the screen, continue to bring the tablet closer at a slow pace and only as long as the comfort behavior is evident.
 - If a fear response arises, pause until the fear response abates, then back the screen a foot further away and wait until calm/comfort behaviors and leaning toward the screen occur.
 - Continue this method until the screen is 10”-18” from the parrot and comfort behaviors are maintained.
- During interaction, you can talk to reconfort the bird but try to limit your own talking to let space for the bird to explore
- When finishing, say, *“Wow, you did great!”*
- **Redo the call with same bird caller 2 more times (each time redo 3 bell/ 3 point screen)**
- If you started as caller, switch and have the other bird be the caller for 3 calls
- After each bird were the caller for 3 calls and you ended the call
 - Stop the camera recording
 - Fill up the [post study diary](#)
 - Upload your video by selecting your bird’s name on [this page](#)

2) Caller Script (two sessions per friend)

- Coordinate with the other bird parent to ensure that they are available and ready
- *Hi, <bird's name>. Do you want to call bird friend? Touch the bell!* (3 times with a treat for each touch)
- *Great, touch the box!* (3 times with a treat for each point - no touching needed)
- *OK, let's call our friend.*
- Press record on a camera situated unobtrusively
- State date, time, and your bird name
- Mute the volume on your bird tablet and hold the tablet screen 3 feet away from your bird as you call the Friend Bird.
- When visual contact is made, observe your bird's reactions.
 - **Comfort:** Leaning toward or calm and watching, soft feathers, dancing or excitement
 - As long as comfort behavior maintains, slowly bring the screen closer until it settles around 18" away for large birds and 10" for small birds.
 - **Aggressive:** The bird postures aggressively or lunges at the screen
 - As long as you are safe and the screen is protected, allow visibility for up to 3 minutes and observe whether behavior settles into comfort (let's discuss further). If aggression continues, close the session and say, *"You looked mad. Let's do something to help you feel better."* Then engage in hands-free, movement-oriented activity (dance, look at target fun).
 - **Fear:** If large fear reactions occur (a flight across the room and refusal to come down, shaking, darting eyes, posturing to fly and pacing) – close the session and say, *"You looked afraid. Let's do something to help you feel better."* Then engage in book enrichment/target training/something else trust building.
 - Maintain a distance between the screen and the parrot such that the parrot is in "interested/aware" mode, but not exhibiting fear responses (this could be up to 9 feet). The parrot should either return to "Calm" behavior or comfort behavior – leaning toward the screen. When the parrot is calm/demonstrating comfort behavior and leaning toward the screen, continue to bring the tablet closer at a slow pace and only as long as the comfort behavior is evident.
 - If a fear response arises, pause until the fear response abates, then back the screen a foot further away and wait until calm/comfort behaviors and leaning toward the screen occur.
 - Continue this method until the screen is 10"-18" from the parrot and comfort behaviors are maintained.
- After 5 minutes, or when both birds have disengaged for approximately 1 minute, close the session and say *"Wow! What a fun bird friend! You did great!"*
- **Be ready for the caller bird to call you again 2 more times**
- If you started as callee, switch and have your bird be the caller for 3 calls
- After each bird were the caller for 3 calls and you ended the call
 - Stop the camera recording
 - Fill up the [post study diary](#)

- Upload your video by selecting your bird's name on [this page](#)