

Basic Finch Care

By *Eliza Kuklinski*

Most people that buy their first finches get a cage labeled for ‘finches, canaries, doves, and other small birds.’ However, most of these cages are not appropriate for any kind of bird, regardless of size. Your finches should have a cage for a macaw. The only problem is that you need the bar spacing to be about one-half inch so beaks and feet do not get injured or stuck in bars. Because of the common misunderstanding of the cage size requirements for finches, it may be a bit tricky to find a suitable cage. You can always build one out of wood and non-galvanized chicken wire.

A large finch cage can house up to 10–15 finches. Cockatiels, canaries, and doves may be housed with finches. I do not recommend housing different species of finches together, however, because they may crossbreed. With limited birds in captivity, pollution of the gene pool can be lethal and cause health problems for the chicks.

Food and water bowls need to be cleaned daily to prevent dirt and mold. Finches need finely chopped fruits and vegetables. They have a hard time with harder-to-chew fruits and vegetables, so offer them finely chopped soft ones like mango and berries. Another good way to do this is to buy dried fruits made specially for birds and chop them finely. Dried greens are available from some bird only stores, too.

Place paper towels on the bottom of the cage so feces and the fruit do not get stuck on the grate.

Include a swing, a few toys, and at least three perches in each cage. Change the papers at the bottom of the cage daily and clean up the whole

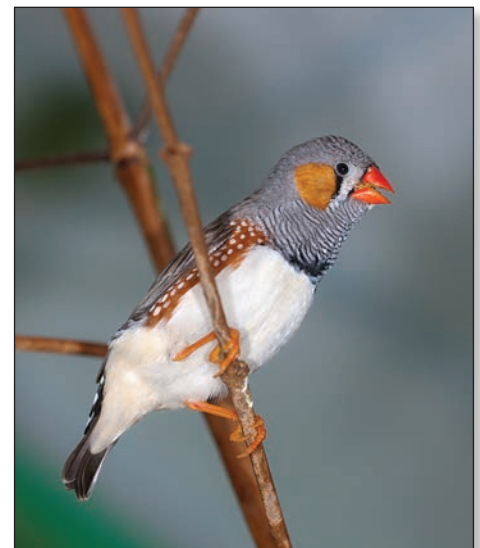


Photos by Andrea Gingerich (top), Dmitry Maslov (right) and Steve Byland (above).

cage every few months or every month. Regulate the size of the cage by how many finches will be on one cage. If the cage is getting crammed because of an increase in the number of finches—don't worry, we all do it—you may need another cage.

As long as the finches may be caught once they are out, you may want to take them out of the cage occasionally because staying in the cage may eventually become boring for them.

A small java wood playstand may help, as will letting them out once a week or more. If you can predator-proof your yard, an aviary is the best thing. You can build your own aviary. Hang black strings with beads or small



plastic chains in front of the aviary door to prevent them from escaping.

Remember, finches do not chew, so it is very easy to construct an escape-proof cage or aviary. If you are breeding finches in the cage or aviary, make sure there is room for several nest boxes so the babies are not crushed if they hatch on the bottom of the cage, in a food dish, or in another nest-like object the finches can reach.

No matter how many birds you have, the most important things are proper care, a proper house and proper love.