



10 Steps to Swing

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Some flocks take right to *The Chicken Swing* with no training at all, while others need a little help. Even if your chickens are already using their swing, it's a pretty neat trick to train them to swing on command.

Here are 10 easy steps to help you get your chickens swinging!

1. Placement of Your Swing

It is essential that you get your setup area cleared and ready before assembling your new swing. Make sure there is nothing in the way of the swinging motion of the swing. It is best to avoid setting up the swing in an area subject to high winds. If you have chicks, you can set the swing up in their brooder. Baby chicks will need you to place them on the swing once or twice, and they will quickly take to swinging. You may add a stump or ground perch below as an extra step for them to jump onto. Raise the swing as they grow, trying to keep it just above their heads.

2. Getting Chickens Familiar with The Swing

To start, set the swing to hang only a few inches above the ground. Simply set the swing up, walk away, and let your chickens check it out on their own terms for *at least 24 hours*. This will familiarize your chickens with the swing. After a couple days, raise the swing to about 18" above the ground. Sometimes swinging happens quickly, sometimes it takes longer, and sometimes they need a little help getting things swinging.

3. Introducing Treats!

Pick a chicken that trusts you and eats treats out of your hand. If you don't have any chickens that will take treats from your hand, start working on this **first!** Take it slow; work for a few minutes a day sitting on the ground shaking your **mealworm treats** to encourage your chickens to eat the treats from your hand. A few days of this and you will get at least a few chickens that will come running to the promise of treats and eat directly from your hand. These are going to be your first swingers!

4. Holding Your Chicken

Work on getting your chickens to trust you and be comfortable with you picking them up. When you pick them up, give them treats and make sure to remain calm and relaxed. Try talking or singing to them. Chickens can sense our mood, and enjoy soothing sounds.

Chickens are intelligent, curious, and cautious. Do not get discouraged if they get flustered. That is what chickens do! Encourage them, calm them, or come back and try it again later. You can then set them down gently on a perch in the coop in preparation for the next step.

5. Setting Your Chicken on The Swing

Next we are going to get your chicken comfortable with sitting or standing on the swing. They need to get over any fears, and figure out how best to grip the perch and balance. Make sure the swing is hanging at a height just above your chicken's head.

- Get your treats handy.
- Pick up your chicken.
- Hold the perch of the swing and set your chicken on it.
- Let go of the perch and the chicken.
- Immediately give them a treat.

Repeat these steps until they are happy, confident, and comfortable on the swing! **DO NOT pull the swing back yet or let it move too much.** This training step can be challenging for both the bird and the trainer at first. Don't worry, the first day they may act like it will never happen, then the next day be a pro! Take your time and use your treats

6. The Swinging Motion

Place your chicken on the swing and gently pull back on the swing, just a little bit at first. Give them a treat when they swing back to you. If they jump off, pick them up and try it again. Encourage them, but do not overdo it. If they get too flustered, come back and work on it later. This step can be a two or three day thing.

7. Pumping the Swing

Now we are going work on showing your chicken how they can control the swing. Yes, they can actually "pump" the swing! While they are up on the moving swing you want them to reach a little for the treats as the swing comes towards you. Hold the treats in your hand in front of them, just out from the swing's arc, and up where they can see them. When they swing *towards* you, give them a treat. Be sure to hold the treats *just* out of their reach to make them stretch for them. This will add force to the swing design, and keep the swing going. You don't need to give them a treat with every swing - they should be having fun by now!

8. Swinging on Their Own

By now you may have already seen your chickens jump up and swing on their own. If not, continue working with them on the previous steps until you do. Every chicken is different. Some will start swinging with no help at all, and others will pick it up after a few steps. Some chickens will start swinging just from watching you train other chickens.

9. Swinging on Command

By now your chickens should be comfortable jumping up and swinging on their own, and have already made swinging part of their daily routine.

Teaching your chickens to swing on command is a fun step to add to your chicken's training. Say "Jump Up" and "Shake-Shake-Shake" the treats above the perch of the swing. When your chicken jumps up and swings to you, give them a treat. Do this daily, and soon they will run and jump up on the swing when they see you coming with your **treats!** Your friends and family should be pretty impressed by this trick! You can now call yourself a **chicken trainer**. Nice work!

10. Start Training More Chickens

You should start working with other chickens in your flock. Remember, roosters love swinging too! You will start seeing them jump up on their own after this introduction. Generally if you get one or two of your chickens swinging, the others will catch on. *Note: It is not always the trained chickens that enjoy swinging the most. Some of my best swingers have never actually been placed on a swing, but have found the nerve to try by watching one of their flock-mates swinging.*



