I am writing this article because I am not an expert on cockatiels. This may sound strange, but it really does make sense. I believe it is often difficult for an expert to think like a beginner and thus explain things in a way a beginner will easily understand. It can be a real challenge to “unlearn” advanced concepts in order to teach someone who is not yet familiar with the basics.

I started out as a beginner in aviculture in my senior year of college at the age of 21. Since I never had a pet bird as a child and never knew anyone who did, my only previous exposure to birds was at the zoo and in pet stores. I started working part-time in a pet shop and it didn’t take long to get hooked on birds. There was a gorgeous pair of Pied Peachfaced Lovebirds in the shop that I could no longer live without and my life has never been the same!

I immediately contracted “parrot fever” and wanted at least one of each kind of bird in the shop! Next I took home a normal grey male cockatiel. “Keegan” means little and fiery and he sure is. He was the best whistler in the store and just had to have him. He quickly learned to say “hello” and “pretty bird” and won his way into my heart.

Not knowing that cockatiels make great pets as single birds, I figured Keegan must be lonely. Naturally, I had to get him a “friend” so I brought home Julia, a beautiful pied female. I did not even know she was a female; I just chose her because she was the prettiest cockatiel in the shop. Still being ignorant about breeding birds, I put Keegan and Julia together in a cage. They bonded very quickly and I just had to have him. He quickly learned to say “hello” and “pretty bird” and won his way into my heart.

As the babies developed, they just got cuter and cuter. Even though some people say the nest shouldn’t be disturbed, I couldn’t resist playing with the babies. After their feathers started growing in, I took them out of the nest quite often and they grew up to be quite tame.

Unfortunately, after all the babies had hatched, but before they opened their eyes, Julia tried to kill one of them. I had brought my neighbors in to see my “grandkids” and when I opened the nest box, there was a bloody baby inside and Julia had blood all over her. She had attacked the baby under one wing and, of course, it was 8:00 p.m. on a Sunday night. I was lucky to find an emergency veterinary clinic less than a mile away and I desperately took the baby, hoping it could be saved. The
As of this writing, I have 15 assorted parrots and my lovebirds are sitting on their fourth clutch of eggs. My message to all beginning breeders out there is don't be intimidated by the experts and their recommendations for how you must set up and feed your birds. Learn as much as you can from the experts — they have valuable advice. However, even if your arrangement is not perfect, you can still successfully breed birds. Just do the best you can with what you have and you will be delighted with the results!

I wish I could provide my birds with an expert-approved, environmentally-controlled environment, but I can't right now. I have two balconies with sliding doors adjacent to the cage and I try to provide the birds with as much fresh air as possible. I have also installed a Vita-light on the ceiling to provide full-spectrum light.

I have read many articles on the best way to set up cockatiels and other birds for breeding, describing minimum cage/flight size, compatible neighbors, etc. However, I have a large "three story apartment cage" divided into six units. This cage houses Bourke’s Parakeets, Grey-cheeked Parakeets, lovebirds and cockatiels side by side and stacked on top of each other. My cockatiels and lovebirds have raised all their families this way, although I am certain it is not considered an optimum arrangement.

Experts also write about how many hours of light birds should receive during the breeding season. Since all my birds are in the living room of my small apartment, and the cage is too large to cover, they stay up late with me until I turn the lights out, usually after midnight. Someday, I hope to have a bird room but until then they will have to remain night owls.

Tristy turned out to be a great mother herself and raised many beautiful, healthy babies. Julia never hurt another baby and was also a good breeder.

Looking back, this experience has really taught me how strong and determined cockatiels can be. Not knowing very much about birds when I started, I probably broke every rule there is. Everyone has read articles about nutritious diets which birds need to successfully breed. Despite repeated efforts, my cockatiels have never been willing to try many foods other than seeds and, as a result, they were switched to pellets a few years ago. Nevertheless, they have repeatedly produced clutch after clutch of big, healthy babies.

I have read many articles on the best way to set up cockatiels and other birds for breeding, describing minimum cage/flight size, compatible neighbors, etc. However, I have a large "three story apartment cage" divided into six units. This cage houses Bourke’s Parakeets, Grey-cheeked Parakeets, lovebirds and cockatiels side by side and stacked on top of each other. My cockatiels and lovebirds have raised all their families this way, although I am certain it is not considered an optimum arrangement.

Experts also write about how many hours of light birds should receive during the breeding season. Since all my birds are in the living room of my small apartment, and the cage is too large to cover, they stay up late with me until I turn the lights out, usually after midnight. Someday, I hope to have a bird room but until then they will have to remain night owls.

Tristy turned out to be a great mother herself and raised many beautiful, healthy babies. Julia never hurt another baby and was also a good breeder.

Looking back, this experience has really taught me how strong and determined cockatiels can be. Not knowing very much about birds when I started, I probably broke every rule there is. Everyone has read articles about nutritious diets which birds need to successfully breed. Despite repeated efforts, my cockatiels have never been willing to try many foods other than seeds and, as a result, they were switched to pellets a few years ago. Nevertheless, they have repeatedly produced clutch after clutch of big, healthy babies.