

Computers & Kids

NEWS

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COMPUTER
EXPLORERS®

Explore the World of Children and Pets!

Have you ever met a preschooler who didn't want a pet? Even children who already have a pet can usually name a few more they would like! Before refusing the next request (at the thought of cleaning out one more hamster cage, aquarium, or litter box), parents should know what a great learning opportunity pets offer children!

According to the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, positive relationships with pets contribute to children's self-esteem, self-confidence, and the development of trusting relationships with people. Pets can be the safe recipients of children's secrets. Pets teach children life lessons about birth, illness, accidents and even death and bereavement. Pets provide a connection with nature. And most importantly, pets teach children respect for other living things.

Do Your Pet Research!

The Internet is filled with advice for families who are contemplating getting a pet.

- The Wondertime site offers suggestions for appropriate pets for children, including low-maintenance betta fish and surprisingly safe rats! (<http://wondertime.go.com/life-at-home/pets/>).
- A list of safety tips and animals for families with young children to avoid is offered at the Centers for Disease Control website (www.cdc.gov/HEALTHYPETS/child.htm).
- The Humane Society sponsors a great site where children can learn more about pets and many other animals (www.kindnews.org/).

Start with a Virtual Pet!

If, for whatever good reason, your family cannot take on a new member right now, several virtual pet websites might appease your child temporarily. Each of the sites, including the popular Webkinz, is discussed in one article at the Little Kids Games Online website (www.littlekidsgamesonline.com/virtual-pets-for-kids.html). Shidonni is a great website where children can actually create their own animal drawing and then watch it come to life and incorporate it into an environment, games, printables, and more. (www2.shidonni.com/s/default.htm?af=shidonnihome).

Amazing Incredible Dogs

Fetch your browser and mouse, 'cause we're going to dig up some amazing goodies about dogs. Even if you're an old dog expert, you'll learn something new.

1) How many eyelids does a dog have?
a) None. Dogs don't have eyelids, silly.
b) Two. I know because that HENK like a human.
c) Three. There's one that you can barely see.
d) Six. Because dogs have three eyes.

At <http://www.expertsynopsis.com/ask.html>, you learn that besides the normal upper and lower eyelids, your dog has a special eyelid called a "haw". It is located inside of the other two and helps protect their eye from dirt and dust. See, if you picked (d), you were correct, but just for one eye. Because dogs have two eyes, the correct answer is (d), six. (There from never-harmest.com)

2) True or False: Dogs can tell if someone has cancer by sniffing their breath.
At http://www.antoniodogpublic.com/news/2008/03/28/0328_dog_sniff.html you learn how dogs can be trained to sniff out some forms of cancer. The answer is true.

3) Can my poodle be a police dog?
 Nope. Breed matters. Usually only Bloodhounds and German Shepherds are trained as police dogs. See http://www.expertsynopsis.com/ask.html/03280328_dogs_your_dad_know_about-police-dogs to learn about how the police choose dogs for active duty.

4) What is the world's longest dog tongue?
Meet Brandy the Boxer, whose 27-inch-long tongue is "The Longest Dog Tongue in the World," according to <http://thebiggestthing.com/brandy-the-longest-dog-tongue/>. And it's still growing! See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4mJfJL2_M.

5) Is a dog smart enough to dial 911?
At <http://www.dogandcat.com/dogandcat.php> you can read about stories of 25 heroic dogs including Rolly, a beagle who literally bit "911" into his owner's cell phone after he collapsed from a seizure. They're amazing!

6) How long can a dog live?
It is rare for a dog to live more than 15 years. But at <http://www.theanimalshelphouse.com/faq/animalfacts.html> you can learn about one dog that lived for 27 years.

Smart dog

And finally - if you enter the words "smart dog" on YouTube's search field, you can pull up 7800 videos of some really amazing dogs. Some are incredible (like the one of a dog who can actually do math equations. Have a look and decide if you think it is a trick. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3t40N0f8c>).

Make a Difference with Pets!

Help your animal loving school-aged child participate in community service projects that work to educate people and protect animals. See "Start a Youth Club" at the Human Society site (www.humanesocietyyouth.org/) for more information on how you and your child can start a club at your child's school that brings children with a love for animals together.

Locate and print the adjacent Little Clickers at www.computerexplorers.com. Follow the "Newsletters" link at the top of the page.

Buckleitner Box

Dear Parents,

The recent American International Toy Fair had thousands of new goodies on display, a few jumped out that you'll want to know about, especially if you care about giving children a hands-on experience with programming and robotics.

Owi featured an expansion of button-cell powered robots zipping all over the place. First released in 2006, these two-inch long bugs can sense light and touch. Some can even be steered with a tiny, two channel remote control (www.robotkitsdirect.com).

Snaptricity is a make-your-own kit from Elenco designed to provide a hands-on experience with circuits; it's one of many electronics kits offered by Elenco targeting schools and homes (www.elenco.com).

While there wasn't much new at LEGO, it is worth noting that the LEGO Mindstorms kits have been tweaked: the 2009 edition comes with three motors, color and light intensity, a sound editor, and a slightly higher price (up to \$280).

Finally, try out Irwin-Toy's very fun I-Top, which has an internal compass that counts its revolutions (www.irwintoy.com).

Don't forget to check out this month's LittleClickers to find out how many eyelids a dog has! Happy Spring!

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