

How To Pick A Pet For Your Child



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Chapter 1 – Why Your Kids Should Have A Pet

Most parents will, at one time or another, be asked by their children if they can have a pet of some sort. Kids and pets go together like ham and eggs on a Sunday morning. Most people agree that kids should have pets. Not only does having a pet teach a child the responsibility of caring for another living creature, but it creates a bond between the child and the animal.

Pets ask for very little but give unconditional love to their owners. Most children are interested in animals the minute they see these creatures. According to many psychiatrists, children who grow up with pets tend to be more caring towards other individuals.

In addition to creating empathy, pets can also raise a child's self esteem. A pet will always be there for a child, even when it seems as if nothing else is going right. There is a comfort that most people, children and adults, find in being unconditionally loved.

Studies of heart attack victims indicate that those who have pets are four times more likely to recover from their heart attack than those without pets. Pets calm us. They stabilize us in a highly unstable world. No matter what is going on in your life, your pet will still want to be walked at a certain time and you will do it because it is part of your routine.

Routines are the mainstay of a healthy mind. Routines are just as important to children as they are to adults. One thing that children like to feel more than anything else is safe. One way to get security in your life and your child's life is through routine. Pets force us to maintain a

routine, making the entire family more balanced.

Just about everyone agrees that pets are good for kids. Even if it is a simple goldfish swimming around in a bowl, pets can teach children so many of life's lessons that they are well worth the investment. The type of pet that you get your kids depends upon their age as well as your lifestyle.

When people think about getting a pet for their kids, they naturally think about getting a dog. A dog is the only pet that really depends on a social environment to survive. All dogs come from wolves somewhere down the line and wolves are the only wild animal that will cohabit with man. Dogs are natural companions for mankind. Other pets are merely creatures that live in the house that you get to enjoy.

Dogs can be quite a lot of work, especially if you get the dog as a puppy. There are certain dog breeds that you will want to avoid when you have small children, for both the safety of the children and the animals. Cats can make good pets, but they are not very tolerant of small children who may pull their tails or squeeze them. Hamsters, gerbils and other rodents are sometimes a wise choice for busy families who want to have a pet but don't really have a lot of time to invest in the animal.

Other pets include fish and reptiles. Some people enjoy having birds as well. Rabbits are always a favorite pet among young children and can be held and played with like a cat, without having to worry about scratching.

Chances are that your child will enjoy any type of pet that you give them

and learn to gradually take care of the animal. While some people prefer to start off small when it comes to introducing their children to pets, others jump right in with a dog. Either way, there is always a period of disruption before everything gets harmonized.

This book will teach you about kids and pets including what type of pets to get your kids, how to care for certain pets, which type of pets to avoid and how to get your children to take care of their pets.

Pets and children are a good combination and add joy to any household. Both are innocent and dependent and require a lot of patience. By getting your children a pet, you are not only teaching them responsibility, building their self esteem and confidence and giving them the opportunity to care for another living creature, you are also giving yourself the gift of receiving unconditional love from a pet.

Chapter 2 - Starting Out With Fish

Many people who want to get pets for their kids start off small with fish. Before we go any further, here's a little bit of insight - the joy you get out of a pet is usually measured by the amount of time you invest in a pet. While children may love watching fish swim around fish tanks, particularly the colorful tropical fish, they cannot take them out of the tank and play with them or take them for a walk around the block. Actually, they can but the fish will die and people will talk.

Getting started with fish, however, is a good idea to see just how responsible your kids really are. Once you get a pet, it should be forever. It is not fair to the animal to bring it home and then get rid of it once you are tired of it. By getting fish, you can see just how far your children are willing to go when it comes to taking care of a pet.

There are two different types of fish tanks that you can get. Most people get fresh water tanks because they are much easier to care for. Others prefer salt water tanks because you can get the more exotic fish and sea creatures in your tank. Taking care of a fish tank is a job for an adult or an older child as it is very involved and can be quite costly. If you want to get started with a small pet for your child, think about getting it a goldfish.

Goldfish can swim in fresh water and do not need a water filter. You can get a small tank and get your child to change the water every other day. It will be important to make sure that the temperature of the water is the same for the fish when the water is changed as a sudden change in temperature will most likely kill the fish.

To get your child set up with a goldfish, you can get a large goldfish bowl, a net, a container where the fish can be put when the water is being changed and goldfish food. You can get more than one goldfish in the bowl as it will be more interesting for your child and the fish. The goldfish should be fed a little every day and allowed to frolic. The water must be changed every other day or the fish will die.

Goldfish are very inexpensive as most of them are simply feeders for other fish. You will not only be teaching your child a lesson on how to care for a pet, you will be saving the life, temporarily, of goldfish who are doomed to be lunch for a bigger fish.

Goldfish do not live very long lives. With care, the fish may last two weeks. The reason they do not live long lives is because of natural selection - they are designed to be food for other bigger fish and do not need a long life span. Like other creatures with a short life span, they tend to breed quite a bit during their short life span, although it is unlikely that your child will have any fish eggs in their fishbowl.

In addition to the feeder goldfish, which usually cost pennies at a fish store, you can also get large, exotic goldfish. These fish will live a longer life, but should be kept in a tank with a filter. A filter in a fish tank suctions out the waste and replenishes the oxygen in the water so that the fish can survive. Fish breathe in the oxygen in the water through their gills and when the oxygen is all used up, the fish dies. This is why it is important to have a filter on a fish tank. However, when caring for feeder type fish that have a typically short life span, it might not be wise to invest in a filter right away.

By starting out slow with goldfish, your child can see if he or she likes the idea of caring for the fish. Your child will also have to experience the death of the fish, and this can be a valuable life lesson as well. Unlike a cat or a dog, the fish does not have a long life span and will not form a bond with your child, however, the death of the fish can be very traumatic for a child.

While starting out with a goldfish as a pet can give your child a good indication of what it is like to care for another creature, it is really only advised for older children who understand the concept of death and the child should be advised early on that the fish does not live a long time. You do not want to make the child feel that he or she somehow caused the death of the fish, as this would do more harm than good when it comes to getting a pet for your child to raise his or her self esteem.

Your child may actually enjoy taking care of his or her fish to the point that you want to invest in a tank. This can be a great hobby for both young and old alike and a clean fish tank can be a beautiful focal point in any room. People who learn to care for fish often have a hobby that they can enjoy throughout their lives.

Taking care of fish and learning about their lives can be a great way for your child to explore the world of pets as well as teach them a bit about oceanography. The care of the fish tanks and the fish will give your child a sense of self worth and raise their self esteem. Your child may not be able to play with the fish or take them out for walks, but the sound of a fish tank is very soothing and has been recommended for people who have trouble going to sleep.

Starting off small with goldfish will give your child a chance to learn how to care for another creature and may open a whole new world for your child. Or, it may be a gateway to caring for bigger pets.

Chapter 3 – Hamsters and Gerbils - Beginner

Pets

Hamsters and Gerbils are little rodents that children often want as pets. This can be a good way to get your child acclimated to caring for a mammal that he or she can actually pick up and pet. Hamsters and Gerbils require little care, but can be a fun pet for a child to have.

Many people do not know the difference between hamsters and gerbils. Both are members of the rodent family. Hamsters are larger and fluffier and larger. Gerbils are smaller and not as furry. Gerbils have tails that are fluffy and hamster tails are long and sleek.

There are certain rules to follow when getting hamsters or gerbils for your children:

- ‡ Hamsters and gerbils will not cohabit - you cannot put a hamster and a gerbil in the same cage;
- ‡ Hamsters and gerbils can be very territorial. If you want more than one creature, get two littermates and put them in the same cage from the start. Do not try to introduce a new hamster or gerbil into a cage with an existing pet;
- ‡ These creatures cannot be "trained" no matter what the guy at the pet store tells you ;
- ‡ Make sure you have a wheel in the cage, or something for the animal to do with their life;
- ‡ If you have two of the same creatures in the cage, make sure that they are the same sex, otherwise, you are going to have a lot of little gerbils or hamsters running around;

- ‡ Use a fish tank instead of a plastic rodent cage as the animal can actually gnaw through the plastic and will also kick the litter out of a wire cage;
- ‡ Expect the animal to live two years at the maximum.

Hamsters and gerbils can be fun pets for kids to have but do not allow yourself to be convinced that the animals can be “trained” to go in one spot in their cage. They can’t. The hamster or gerbil will go all over the cage, including close to where he or she eats. Rodents are not known for their cleanliness, despite what the guy at the pet store tells you.

Both hamsters and gerbils are equally friendly and both will be nocturnal. You can teach the animal to live according to your clock by covering his cage at night with a towel. Many people simply take the wheel out of the cage when they are sleeping so that the animal learns to use it during the day and does not keep the entire house up during the night by running in the wheel.

A fish tank makes the best container for the hamster or gerbil. There are fish tanks that have a netted top that cost a little bit more money, but are well worth the investment. These are normally used to keep lizards, but work very well with a hamster. In addition to a wheel, you can also put an empty roll of toilet paper into the cage for the hamster or gerbil to run into.

To set up your hamster or gerbil cage, you need to have a bottle of water that will drip down whenever the creature sucks on the tube. These are sold in pet shops and come in a variety of sizes. The bottle will hook onto the side of the cage and you can easily refill it when it gets close to being

empty.

You will also need litter and a bowl for food. Hamster and gerbil food as well as litter, are sold in pet stores and even discount stores. You should also make sure that the animal has something to gnaw on, such as wood. There are wood gnawing objects that are sold in pet stores for the animals as well.

It is important that your hamster or gerbil has something on which to gnaw because the teeth of rodents continue to grow. They have to keep gnawing at something in order to keep their teeth from growing to the point where they extend through the roof or bottom of their mouths. If the animal does not have something on which to gnaw, the teeth will continue to grow to the point where the animal gets an infection and dies.

Care of the hamster or gerbil is not very difficult. You should have some sort of container in which to put the animal when you change the litter. Older children can easily learn how to change the litter in the cage, but should be aware of the hygienic factor and must be sure to wash their hands thoroughly afterwards. Younger children can observe the hamster or gerbil and can be taught to make sure that the animal has food and water.

The hamster or gerbil can be taken out of its cage and allowed to run around, however, they can get lost very easily. This is the reason why many people use a hamster ball. A hamster ball is a large, plastic ball that you can put the creature in, close up and allow it to roam around without the fear of the animal getting lost. The hamster ball has holes in

it which allows the animal to breathe. However, the holes also allow waste from the animal to get all over the carpet. Make sure that you vacuum thoroughly after the hamster has been out among the family.

If you have another animal in the house, particularly a cat, never allow the hamster out without the hamster ball. A cat will kill the hamster within seconds as this is their natural prey. Even having the little guy in the hamster ball with a cat around is likely to agitate the hamster or gerbil and frustrate the cat, so keep the two apart.

Younger children will enjoy playing with the hamster and gerbil and if they are handled often, they will not bite. Young children should be supervised around any type of animal, and particularly around a hamster or gerbil. Children must be sure not to squeeze the animal to death and you should also be sure that the animal does not bite. Again, the key to getting the animal not to bite is to make sure that it is handled in a tranquil manner in which the animal feels safe. Any animal will bite when they feel threatened, it is a natural reaction.

Your children can also be in charge of making sure the animal has fresh water. Although the bottle will last for a week at least, it is nice to change the water every day to give the pet fresh water. You can allow a child to do this on a daily basis to give him or her some responsibility towards the pet.

The animal must be fed every day and the normal rule of thumb is to just make sure the bowl is filled all of the time with food. Some hamsters and gerbils will knock over the bowl and scatter the contents. Again, these animals are not known for being neat.

Never put two older animals together in the same cage as they will literally fight to the death. Expect the hamster or gerbil, if well cared for, to live for about two years.

Other members of the rodent family that people use as pets include mice, rats and guinea pigs. These creatures generally require the same type of care as hamster and gerbils but guinea pigs are much larger. Many schools will have a hamster, gerbil or guinea pig as the "class pet."

Rats, despite the fact that they are feared by many people, actually make the best pets in the rodent family as they are generally the most intelligent of all the creatures. Mice are often used to feed snakes and other large pets and have a much shorter life span than the average gerbil or hamster.

Chapter 4 – What About Reptiles?

Some children really like reptiles for pets and small turtles used to be a

very popular pet to give to a child many years ago. Reptiles and amphibians make good pets for children who enjoy these exotic creatures, but require a bit of care.

Most reptiles and amphibians can be kept in aquarium tanks with a netted top. They can be taken out and played with, but generally do not do much. Some of the more popular reptiles and amphibians to get as pets for children include the following:

- ‡ Lizards
- ‡ Turtles
- ‡ Snakes
- ‡ Frogs

Young boys tend to gravitate towards these creatures more than young girls. While some snakes should never be used as pets in homes where there are children, such as the boa constrictor or any other constricting snake, most snakes are harmless creatures. A child might like the idea of petting the snake, which appears slimy, and finding out that it is actually soft.

Reptiles such as snakes, turtles and lizards, usually live in hot, dry climates and need that sort of environment in which to survive. There are lights that you can purchase to shine on the creatures to make sure that they stay warm. These animals will die if exposed to the cold, so it is important that they remain in a hot, arid environment.

Amphibians like water and land and can be kept in a tropical aquarium that is set up to give the frogs or toads a chance to enjoy both the water

and the land. Toads are generally found in dry areas and frogs usually in the water, but they are essentially the same type of animal and extremely adaptable.

Although reptiles and amphibians are not the typical cute and cuddly pet that one thinks of to give a child, they can be a great learning tool for children as well as teach them a bit about responsibility. Learning about reptiles and amphibians will put the child that far ahead in school when it comes time for biology and may initiate an interest in science.

Reptiles and amphibians may not be the type of pet a that a child can enjoy frolicking in the yard with, but the lessons that these creatures can teach a child about their environment and care will stay with him or her for the rest of their lives. Either way, having reptiles and amphibians as pets can be a valuable learning experience for any child.

Chapter 5 – Do Birds Make Good Pets For Kids?

Birds are usually easy to care for and can make charming pets for people, but are not much fun for children. Birds can chirp and make a

melodious sound. While some people allow their birds to fly all over the house, this is not usually advisable as there is no way to train a bird. Unlike reptiles and amphibians, birds are not considered “challenging” enough for most kids and are virtually ignored when it comes to the best pets for children. Birds have long since been thought of as a pet for elderly women.

Birds are very easy to care for, however, and relatively inexpensive. Like hamsters and gerbils, they need a water bottle and a bowl of food. You can put newspaper down in their cage and will have to change the paper on a daily basis to keep the cage clean.

You are better off to get two birds instead of one. Two birds will live harmoniously together if they are both of the same species. If you are buying a parakeet, for example, you will be advised to get both a male and a female.

Your child will like watching the birds and can take part in making sure that they are fed and watered, however, there is not much more to do with the birds than this. Although, like reptiles, learning about birds can be interesting for a child and can also give him or her an appreciation of nature. While birds may not be the most challenging or interesting pet for children, they are easy to care for and can teach your child about bird life as well as something about responsibility. Because they cannot come out and play, however, makes them not very desired by most children.

Years ago, young boys kept pigeons in coops on top of roofs in the city. Pigeons were a very popular pet for young city youths in the 1950s and

before as these creatures would be taught to carry messages as people found that they would return back to the coop after flying off. However, today the pigeon coop is no longer popular or desired in the city and young people rarely keep pigeons as pets.

Chapter 6 – All About Rabbits

Rabbits have always been a popular pet. Each Easter, children are given rabbits by well meaning parents thinking that the creature will not live a

long time. Despite their rather short gestation period, rabbits live on the average, about 10 years. They are not a pet to be taken lightly and you will put quite a bit of work into the pet.

Although it is not technically a rodent, a rabbit will still gnaw and needs a gnawing stick. Because they are considerably larger than hamsters, rabbits need a larger cage in which to live. As they can get very messy and generally have an odor to them, rabbit cages are usually kept out of doors in nice weather and in the garage or basement in the cold weather. Before getting a rabbit for your child, think about the following:

- ‡ Do you have an adequate rabbit cage?
- ‡ Where are you going to put the rabbit cage in the winter?
- ‡ Do you realize how long the rabbit will live?

Rabbits are yet another pet that people will insist can be "litter trained." This is difficult, if not impossible to do and chances are that your rabbit will go all over the place, no matter where he or she is at, so they should be supervised carefully whenever they are out of the cage.

Rabbits are docile creatures and very friendly. They are easy to handle and rarely every bite. Caring for a rabbit is similar to caring for a hamster or gerbil. They need fresh bedding that must be changed on a weekly basis, fresh water and food. You will put a bottle feeder in the rabbit's cage to give him or her water.

Unlike gerbils and hamsters, rabbits are a lot more easy going when it comes to placing another rabbit in the cage. They are not as territorial and tend to be able to get along with other rabbits, however, this is more

the case with two females than with two males. Male rabbits may fight at first, but will soon learn to get along with one another. A male and a female will most likely begin breeding right away and rabbits have a relatively short gestation period of only two months. Rabbit litters generally contain about six rabbits.

In addition to their rabbit food, rabbits can also be given lettuce, which they love, and carrot sticks. Celery sticks are also good for rabbits. You must make sure that the bunny has something on which to gnaw.

Rabbits can put up with all sorts of manhandling and will rarely bite, although they do have nails that can scratch a child. A young child should be taught to treat the rabbit gently and kindly and be carefully supervised when handling the creature so they do not squeeze them too tight. Rabbits do not mind being handled and their fur is very soft, making them a much coveted pet for young children.

The drawback to owning rabbits are that they tend to get sick easily. They are prone to eye infections more than most animals and you might end up spending a lot of money in vet bills. Another drawback to owning rabbits is the space factor. You need a place to keep the cage where the odor won't be as noticeable. No matter how fastidious you or your child is about cleaning the rabbit cage, it will still have an odor. And you have to remember that the rabbit is bound to live a long, full life if well cared for, which means that you will have the creature around for the next 10 years.

On the plus side, rabbits are very gentle pets. You have to worry more about a young child hurting the rabbit than the rabbit hurting the child.

They are non aggressive and relatively easy to care for. They can be quite a fun pet for a young child as long as you have the space. Unlike gerbils and hamsters, you do not have to worry about it biting your child whenever he or she picks it up. A rabbit is even docile enough to walk on a leash, although it will not walk very far.

If you have a cat in the family, make sure that you keep it far away from the rabbit. Cats are predators and rabbits are among their natural prey. A cat will go for the rabbit's throat in seconds, leaving you and your children horrified. If you have a cat, keep it far away from your pet rabbit.

Rabbits can be purchased at your local pet store or even adopted at the animal shelters. Your child may learn to like raising these creatures so much that he or she will want to begin breeding them. There are even rabbit shows in which the animals compete for grooming prizes, similar to cat shows.

These animals, despite the fact that they need space for a cage, have a lot to offer a young child. Chances are that your children will enjoy having a rabbit for a pet very much.

Chapter 7 – Feline Fancy - All About Cats

Cats are quickly replacing dogs as the most favored pet in the United States. Man's best friend has found himself playing second fiddle to these frisky felines for one reason - cats require very little work. Cats are the ideal pet for anyone who doesn't have the time for a dog, but still

wants a pet around the house. Care of a cat is simple, but be forewarned - cats live a good, long time.

Most children love little kittens. They are soft, cuddly and stick to you like tacky glue if you try to pull them from you. Little children must be carefully supervised around kittens, for both the sake of the child and the kitten. Children tend to squeeze, kittens tend to scratch.

Cats are fully grown in less than a year and never need to be taken for a walk. In addition, it is very simply to train a cat. Simply bring it home from the shelter or store and scratch its little paws in the litter box. Once it knows where the litter box is, the cat will make a beeline for it whenever it has to go.

Some people actually train cats to use the toilet. This is done by attaching a litter box to a contraption that fits on the inside of the toilet rim. The cat gets used to using this as his or her litter box and when you remove the contraption, the cat will still use the toilet. However, there is no way yet to teach a cat to flush.

Female cats tend to be more aloof than male cats and many people feel that males are much more friendly. In reality, all cats are lonesome creatures and solitary hunters and, unlike dogs, do not crave your attention. Males appear "friendlier" because they will greet you and rub up against you. They are merely staking their territory, not trying to please you.

When choosing a cat, you may choose a male, which is easier to have neutered and generally of a better temper, or a female, which is always

more aloof and is more inclined to scratch or bite. A male cat must be neutered before he reaches adulthood or he will have the habit of spraying urine all over the house to mark his territory.

Cats are very territorial animals and they are predators. There are many plusses about owning a cat. They include:

- ‡ You don't have to worry about mice or bugs; your cat will spend all day hunting them down;
- ‡ You never have to walk the cat;
- ‡ The cat will not be lonely during the day when the family is at school or work;
- ‡ The cat will not care if you go on a trip as long as someone comes in to feed and water it;
- ‡ You do not have to stick to a set feeding schedule with a cat, you can have dry food and fresh water available all of the time and the cat will eat when it feels like it;
- ‡ You can have the cat declawed so it cannot scratch your furniture;
- ‡ Stroking a cat is supposed to decrease blood pressure;
- ‡ Despite the reputation of being aloof, cats do get along well with their human companions.

The down side to owning a cat includes the following:

- ‡ You cannot take the cat for a walk, or out for a ride in the car without it freaking out;
- ‡ The cat will most likely sleep 18 hours a day (this could be a plus);
- ‡ A cat bite can be very painful as cats will bite all the way through;
- ‡ Other animals in the house, including fish, may be in jeopardy when a

cat is in the house;

- ‡ Cats can live up to about 20 years if kept indoors, which means that your child will most likely go off to college and you will be home with the cat.

Before getting a cat for your children, think about where you want to have the litter box and where you will keep the food for the cat. The food and the litter box should never be close to one another as cats are very clean animals and do not like to go to the bathroom close to where they eat.

Younger children can be taught to keep the food in the cat's bowl and also make sure that the animal has fresh water. Older children can be taught to scoop the litter box on a daily basis so that it doesn't stink and the cat continues to use the litter box.

Cats are very fastidious animals. They like their litter box to be clean at all times and will let you know if they don't think things are up to standards. They way they will let you know is by either knocking all of the litter out of the box or having accidents in other parts of the house. This is why it is so important to make sure that the box is scooped on a daily basis.

Most cat litter today is the scoop able kind. This clumps whenever the cat urinates or defecates in the box. The cat will naturally bury any of its waste, so you can put the scooper in there, which is like a strainer, to dig out all of the waste. Doing this on a daily basis will keep your house from having "cat odor" and will keep the cat using the litter box.

Food for your cat consists of dried food and canned food. Many pet owners feed their cats both types of food and some feed the cat on a schedule. This is not necessary. Most veterinarians will tell you to simply offer fresh water at all times for the cat and keep his or her food bowl filled with dry cat food. This will keep the cat eating on his or her own schedule and will also maintain a healthy digestive tract. It is not good to switch between moist and dry food all of the time, so choose one or the other. Dry food is better if you are planning on keeping the food in the bowl all of the time as it does not smell.

Cats are not like hamsters or rabbits or any of the other pets we discussed. Cats get the run of the house. To keep a cat in a cage is truly criminal as this is one creature that really likes his freedom. Unlike dogs, cats do not need a space of their own. Most dogs do not mind being crated when you are out - it gives them a feeling of security. You cannot do this to a cat.

Your cat will expect to have the run of the house. You cannot keep it from jumping on the furniture and the bed. It will most likely jump on your kitchen countertops, table and chairs. All cats shed and cat hair is like cotton candy - very difficult to pick up with an ordinary vacuum cleaner.

You can try some tricks to "train" a cat to keep off of certain furniture and especially off of the table and countertops. These include the following:

- ‡ Crumpled paper. Put some crumpled waxed paper on the countertops that make noise whenever the cat jumps on it. The sound will scare the cat and she will jump down;

- ‡ Spray bottle. Cats hate water. You can fill a spray bottle with water and squirt the cat whenever he or she exhibits inappropriate behavior, such as jumping on the counter tops. This will upset the cat and he or she will jump down. Only to jump up again when you are not looking.
- ‡ Mousetraps under paper. Some people have used mousetraps under newspaper on furniture and countertops. The trap closes and makes a startling noise when the cat jumps on the paper and scares the cat away.

Cats do not have a very long memory and chances are that your cat will eventually go on the table, counter tops and furniture often. If you use the spray bottle, he or she will simply go on there when you are not looking.

To keep your family healthy and away from the germs a cat can spread, use a cutting board and never prepare food on your countertops. Make sure that you wash the table and chairs often and get a good vacuum cleaner that will pick up pet hair.

Although they do not have the charm or allure of dogs, cats can be a lot of fun for young children. They may not have the instinct to please, as does a dog, but they are naturally curious and can be taught to play games.

Little children can easily play with cats by crumpling up paper and tossing it. The cat will instinctively go after the paper. He or she will not return the paper, as it is not their instinct to retrieve anything for humans, but they will have a good time playing with the paper. Cats

tend to like things that make crinkly noises, but not too loud.

Another game your children can play with your cat involves a flashlight. Allow your children to make the light dance on the walls and watch the cat try to catch the light. Both the cat and your children will be amused for hours with this game.

Wands and other toys are available for cats at your local pet store, but cats are one of the easiest creatures in the world to amuse. Cats and children will generally amuse one another for quite some time before getting bored.

Supplies you will need to keep a cat include a litter box, scooper, litter, food and a food dish. You will have to take the cat in to get spayed or neutered, a service many animal clinics offer for free. You may also wish to have your cat declawed. If you decide not to declaw your cat, you can get a scratching post for him or her to scratch at.

Cats will need shots for a variety of illnesses, although you can add years to your cat's life if you choose to keep him or her inside. Unlike dogs, cats are not regulated by the municipality and do not have to be registered. They are not required to have a rabies shot every year.

Your cat may get sick and have to be taken to the vet. In such a case, the vet will usually want to make sure that your cat is up to date on all of its shots. If your cat has not had his or her shots, they will be administered at the vet's office for an additional fee. If you go on a trip and choose to board your cat, you will also have to provide proof of shots.

While many people feel that keeping a cat indoors is cruel, your cat will live a lot longer if you do not allow it to become an outdoor cat. Once you allow your cat outdoors, chances are that he or she will always want to get out and may even wait by the door for you to open it so they can get out. A cat who is used to being outdoors may have a problem using the litter box and will generally prefer to do his or her “business” outside.

Cats who go outside also may bring in diseases and germs upon their return. Many cats will bring a kill home, such as a mouse, as a “gift” to you. Most people do not want such gifts and for this as well as the above mentioned reasons, they choose to keep their cats indoors.

A cat can be a loving companion, despite the fact that it is a solitary hunter. They do not come when they are called, cannot do tricks and do not aim to please, but they can be the ideal pet for your kids, particularly if you work and do not want to spend a lot of time taking care of the animal.

Chapter 8 – Dogs - The Ultimate Pet

Dogs are pretty much the ultimate pet for kids as well as adults. As mentioned earlier, all dogs descend from wolves which are the only wild animal that will cohabit with man. Dogs are a pack animal and rely heavily on socialization. It is criminal to leave a dog alone for long periods of time as they are not solitary hunters. Dogs hunt in packs and rely on companionship to live.

Most kids will beg for a dog at least once in their lives. A dog is the ideal

pet for kids and can teach you a lot about the world as well as yourself. Dogs rely on routine and have the mentality of a two year old. They love unconditionally and only want to please you. Besides the love you give to your child, there is no better way to demonstrate this emotion than by giving your child a dog.

Dogs are quite a bit of work, particularly if you are planning on getting a puppy. A puppy will get into everything. They like to chew and will go after shoes and anything else they can get their little paws on. They can be quite destructive.

Puppies also take quite some time to be housebroken. A puppy cannot be expected to be fully trained until he or she is about one year old. Prior to that time, a puppy simply cannot control himself in order to wait to go outside. Expecting a small puppy to be trained is like expecting a small child to be trained. You have to have patience when getting a small puppy.

This does not mean that you have to allow the puppy to run riot all over the house, destroying carpeting and furniture. Dogs like having their own "den." This is a sense of security for a dog and your puppy will not mind being crated when you are not watching him or her. You can keep your puppy in a crate at night so he or she does not have any accidents. During the day, you can use a baby gate to keep the puppy in an area where it can be confined without doing damage. Many people choose to keep the puppy in the kitchen as the floor is usually tile or linoleum and easy to clean in case there is an accident.

Young children cannot be expected to train a puppy; this feat is difficult

for most adults. Young children can be taught how to play with the puppy and also how to feed the animal. Unlike cats, a dog will eat until it bursts. You have to feed a dog a few times a day and you should do this on a set schedule. This will allow the dog to become accustomed to eating at a certain time and will also regulate his or her bowels. The trick to having harmony with a dog in the house is routine.

While young children can be taught how to feed the dog, older children can learn how to pick up after accidents and also how to give the dog a bath. Unlike cats, dogs require a bath now and then to keep them from smelling. Most dogs hate baths, but it is necessary unless you want your dog to stink to high heaven. If the dog is small, your children should have no trouble at all giving the dog a bath. They have to make sure that the water is at room temperature and that doggie shampoo is used on the fur. After the dog gets out of the tub, he or she will want to shake to remove all of the water. He can then be towel dried. You can even use a hairdryer on the dog, which he or she will probably like.

Another chore that the children can participate in when it comes to caring for the dog is brushing the dog. Dogs should be brushed to keep their coats looking good. It will also keep the dog clean and remove any excess hair that will be shed all over the house. Dogs with longer hair should be brushed more often than those with short hair. Dogs generally like being brushed, as they like the attention, and should sit fine for the kids to brush him or her.

Taking the dog for a walk is yet another chore that the kids can do. A walk should be done in the morning and the evening as part of the dog's routine. It also gets to be part of the routine of everyone in the

household. Although this is work, this can really be a blessing. Many people today are so stressed out because there is "so much to do." This includes even young school kids. Having a dog and walking it at the same time every day brings some order into an otherwise un-orderly life and can really improve life for the family by alleviating some stress. Everyone begins to expect the routine of walking the dog and it becomes second nature.

Walking, brushing, feeding and bathing are all things that children can do to help take care of the dog. When it comes to playing with the dog, you will not have to ask the children to do this. The dog and the children will get along famously and play together all of the time.

The type of play will depend on the type of dog. Most dogs love going out into the yard with the kids and running around. Kids can throw the ball to the dog and teach him or her to catch it. Larger dogs who are used to cold weather will enjoy going out in the snow and playing with the kids. If you have a fenced in yard, the dog and the kids can play together happily for hours.

Dogs can be very protective of children. Some dogs will look at the children as their "charges" and treat them accordingly. Your children are a bit safer if they are at the park with their dog than if they are at the park alone. Many predators are wary of dogs and dogs seem to have a sixth sense when it comes to sniffing out danger. This is not to say that you should leave your young children at the park alone with the dog as their sole protection, but that the dog is an extra added protective layer for your children, and for you. People who want to do another person harm are less likely to approach someone who has a dog.

Your dog will require a lot of vet care as well. In some municipalities, you may have to register the dog with the city. It will have a license number and in case the dog gets lost, you have a better chance of getting the dog returned. The license number is a way to track down the owner in case the dog bites someone. If your dog gets loose and bites someone, you will have to provide proof of rabies vaccination or the dog will be destroyed. If the dog bites someone in an unprovoked attack, you are better off getting rid of the animal, especially if you have children.

Most dogs, although they are predators, will not bite unless threatened and rarely attack those with whom they live. A dog may, however, use their mouth as a way to lead you somewhere. They may try to grab your hand, using their mouth, to pull you to see something. If your dog does this, follow him or her as chances are that you need to see whatever it is the dog wants to show you. There have been countless cases of people being saved by their dogs who led another person to save them.

Children who have dogs in the family are most likely to spend more time playing with the dog than watching television. The dog can also go with the family on different outings. There are several chain pet stores that allow dogs in the store and this can be a treat for both the kids as well as your dog.

Dogs are not born to know how to walk properly on a leash. Most dogs will pull at a leash and have the urge to take off. If you have small children, it may seem as the dog is taking them for a walk, rather than the other way around. You can take your children with you when you take your dog to obedience school. Here, you can learn how to teach the

dog to walk on the lead as well as other simple commands, such as sit, or lay down. This can be a great activity for the entire family.

Dogs can be trained to do a number of things and make very loyal pets. They do require work and patience, however, and are not for people who do not want to take the time to teach the dog to behave. If you do decide to take the time for a dog, expect your life to slow down a bit. Realize that you will have to adhere to some sort of routine. For most people, this can be a way for the family to re-connect. A dog is the ultimate pet for children as well as adults.

Chapter 9 – Where To Shop For Pets

If you have made the decision to get a pet for your children, consider adopting a dog or a cat from the local animal shelter. When you rescue an animal from the pound, you will find a loyal and devoted companion for life. It is almost as if the animal “knows” that you rescued it from doom and is grateful.

Most animal shelters have both dogs and cats as well as other animals such as rabbits and other assorted small mammals such as hamsters and gerbils. Many people get pets and, for one reason or another, have to get rid of them.

If you get a dog or a cat from the animal shelter, they will most likely spay or neuter the animal for free. They will also probably give it all of its

shots. You will have to pay a nominal fee to adopt the pet, but it will end up to be much less expensive than getting a dog from a breeder and having to take it to the vet for shots. If you get a dog, it will most likely have a microchip in it so that if it is lost, it can be returned to you if it is taken to another shelter or a vet's office.

While the chances are slim that you will get a pure bred puppy at an animal shelter, you can find a wonderful mixed breed dog that is a little older who will make a perfect companion for your children. The people at the shelter often keep a record of the dog's history and you can find out whether it is housebroken as well as if it is good with children and other pets.

When you adopt a cat or a dog from an animal shelter, you should bring the kids with you so that they can pick out the animal. You will most likely have to provide information to the people who run the shelter before they allow you to take a look at the dogs. While many of the dogs are strays, others are simply out of a home because the family moved or someone was allergic to the dog. In some cases, a person just didn't have the patience to train the animal and did not have the time to spend with the dog.

People at the animal shelter will advise you on what type of dog you should get. Some dogs do not make good pets for families with young children. One of the best aspects about getting a dog from the pound, in addition to saving an animal's life, is the fact that the people who work at the shelter normally know way more about dogs than you. They can tell you which type of dog will go best for your children.

Little children will do better with a mid sized dog. Little dogs can be too fragile for little children who can play somewhat rough with the dog. A little dog can easily be hurt with too much roughhousing.

A larger dog can actually hurt small children, most likely inadvertently. Large dogs sometimes don't know their own strength and can knock a child down.

Most of the dogs at the animal shelter will be mixed breed dogs. Mixed breed dogs sometimes make better pets for families with children. They tend to be less aggressive than some pure breeds and are usually smarter. They also tend to have less health problems than purebreds. When buying a breed dog, you have to look at lineage and make sure that the animal was bred properly. Many pet stores get dog from puppy mills in which dog are inbred and undesired qualities such as aggressive tendencies, are not bred out of the dogs.

Many of the mixed breed dogs at the shelter are just average dogs, in need of a home, and are the result of pet owners not having their dogs spayed or neutered. Most of them make excellent pets.

In addition to the animal shelters, you can also get an animal from a pet store. People who want a puppy often get a dog from a pet store as most of the dogs that wind up in the pound are older dogs. When getting a dog at the pet store, you can see how the animal interacts with your children. The pet store will allow your children to play with the dog in a small pen.

A puppy may be less intimidating to young children and is not likely to be

aggressive. The puppy can grow up with the children and will come to think of them as “part of the pack.” Most animal lovers will agree that puppies and small children together make an adorable pair.

Another place you can go to get a puppy or even a dog is a dog breeder. Dog breeders usually specialize in certain breeds of dogs. Most dog breeders are breeding dogs for show quality. Not all of the puppies in a litter will be show quality dogs. Some will be “pet quality.” This means that they are not quite up to showing, due to markings, a crooked tail or some other minor flaw in the animal. Breeders are usually eager to get rid of the puppies that are “pet quality” and these animals are priced much cheaper than those in the pet store.

To find a breeder, take a look in your local newspaper or online. Here you can find dozens of different dog breeders. You are better off to buy a puppy from a breeder, although it may not be as convenient as buying the animal from a pet store. The breeder will be an expert on this type of breed and may even breed other types of dogs. They will be able to give you tips on how to raise your puppy and get him or her to blend in with your family.

Another place to get a dog is from an individual who is moving or giving a dog away due to allergies. Many people do not realize that they are allergic to dog dander until they actually get the dog. You can sometimes find a good dog that may even be housebroken, by looking in the paper.

Cats and other animals are just as easily found in pet stores and at humane shelters. Cats are usually plentiful as they have a shorter

gestation period and generally have a larger litter than dogs. There are purebred cats that some people like, such as rag dolls and Persian cats. These do not usually make good pets for children. You are better off to adopt a cat or a kitten from the pound before you get a purebred cat from a cat breeder.

You can also find cats that are “free to a good home” in the newspaper. The spring and summer seem to be “kitten season” and you can generally find a lot of free kittens offered to good homes in the paper.

When choosing between getting a kitten from an individual or from a shelter, consider the fact that the shelter is likely to charge a fee, but it will give the animal all of its shots and also spay or neuter the animal. If you check the price at the vet’s office, you will see that you can save quite a bit of money by getting the animal from the pound.

You can also find other pets such as guinea pigs, gerbils, hamsters, and rabbits at the animal shelter. Many small pet stores will sell birds, gerbils, hamsters, mice, guinea pigs and fish but not cats and dogs. You really have quite a variety of places to go if you want to get fish. You can save some money, however, when looking in the paper or online and finding an aquarium second hand.

When getting a pet for your kids, you should seriously consider adopting the pet from your local animal shelter. You will most likely find a pet that will be a loyal companion for the rest of its life, and one that will be in good health. If your children are older, you may consider adopting an older dog from the pound as it is more likely to be housebroken and may even be trained not to jump on the furniture. Dogs end up in the pound

for all sorts of reasons and are usually gentle. The shelter will not put dogs up for adoption that show aggressive tendencies towards humans.

Chapter 10 – Pets To Avoid

Obviously, you will want to avoid any pet that can potentially harm your children. Aggressive dogs such as pit bull terriers who are mainly bred for fighting, should not be around children. Those who have these animals will balk at such a statement and defend the breed. However, you only have to read the paper to find incidents of these animals attacking and even killing young children.

Those who are really into animal rights will blame the humans for the dog's behavior and in most cases, they are right. Dogs are not born to be mean. But some dogs do have more aggressive traits than others and do not make an ideal pet for kids. While dog advocates will disagree, do you really want to take a chance when it comes to your kids?

Large dogs that are built for protection, such as Dobermans, Rottweilers and German Shepherds are loyal dogs that make good companions for

humans. German Shepherds are incredibly smart dogs which is why they are used in police work. Presas, Chows and Akitas are attractive animals, but have been known to be aggressive. You are better off not having one of the these type of breeds with small children.

Any dog that appears to have been mistreated may also be aggressive. If you are adopting a dog out of the pound, try to see about its history before bringing it around your children. Most animal shelters have a place where you can interact with the dog. This gives you a perfect opportunity to see how the dog gets along with your children. Dogs who appear aggressive or who growl at your children, are not the ideal pet.

You never, ever want to have your children afraid of their own dog. You also never want to leave a dog, any dog, around a young child unsupervised. Dogs are animals and animals do not know how to reason. Never trust any animal around a baby.

With young children, you are better off getting a kitten if you are thinking of getting them a cat. Kittens will get used to being handled if they are handled frequently when young, and as long as you teach your children respect for the animals, they will not bite or scratch. Small children, however, should be supervised around cats.

If you have children in your house, you are better off to get an indoor cat. The cat will not go out and bring in any sort of diseases from the outside. Indoor cats tend to live a lot longer because they are not out in the elements, do not get exposed to diseases from other cats and avoid fights.

There are pure bred cats available at catteries throughout the United States. Some people really want Persian or a Maine Coon or Siamese cat. These cats are beautiful animals, but generally a bit high strung. They often have a very predictable behavior and may or may not make a good pet for a child. Some cats, such as Siamese cats, tend to "talk" quite a bit. They are always meowing. These cats can be a fun pet although they have a reputation of being "aloof."

You are much better off adopting a kitten for your child than getting a pure bred cat from a cattery. This is for the sake of your children as well as the animals. There are so many cats looking for homes in adoption centers that it seems criminal to actually seek out more cats from breeders. Unless you are thinking of showing a cat in a cat show, consider getting a kitten or a cat from the local animal shelter.

Some cats will hiss when frightened, this does not mean that they are aggressive. Teach your children not to threaten the cat or behave in an aggressive manner towards the animal.

Unlike dogs, a new kitten or cat that you bring home is liable to run and hide under a sofa, bed or some other "safe" place until he or she feels that it is okay to come out. This could be several days. Put food and water out for the cat, show him or her the litter box and be patient. The cat will come out when he or she is ready to be part of the family.

Some cats will not be scared. They may be as bold as brass and start taking over the family right away. This is usually the sign of a spunky animal that will most likely give you years of pleasure.

Cats can live for up to 20 years or more with proper care. For the most part, they make fine pets for both children and adults. If you treat the cat with kindness as a kitten, handle it often and gently, it will be receptive to the humans in the house, including the children.

Unlike dogs, cats do not live to "please." They are also unlikely to answer to their name. For the most part, they live in a world of their own in which they are the owners of the house and you are the intruder. However, they do learn to become somewhat social with their human companions over a period of time, as long as they are treated kindly.

Chapter 11 – Teaching Your Kids To Care For Their Pets

Kids will tell you anything you want to hear when they want to get a pet. The first thing out of their mouths will be that they will “take care of it.” Most children have no idea about the responsibility of a pet. Adults, on the other hand, know plenty. And they also know that they will most likely have to take up some of the duties of their errant children. Kids often have good intentions when it comes to getting an animal, but when the care of the animal starts interfering with their social life, and after the novelty wears off, they will start fighting over “whose turn it is” to take care of the dog or cat.

If you have more than one child who wants a pet, make sure that you tell them in advance what will be expected of them when it comes to the care for the animals. You will have to outline all of the chores that will be required of the children. You can even put a chart on the refrigerator and make a schedule so there are no questions as to who does what.

While you will want to make sure that your children live up to their responsibilities when taking care of their pets, be prepared to pick up the

slack when your child “forgets” to care for the animal. Unlike your child’s room, which he or she may also neglect, the pet is a living thing. It will do for you to “teach your child a lesson” by allowing the creature to have an unclean environment in which to live or not have food and water.

You are better off to care for the animal when your child forgets and penalize your child for not taking care of the pet. There will be, of course, some instances when your child cannot take care of the pet. You certainly don’t want to send your child out with a fever to walk the family dog because it is “his turn,” nor do you want to make your child go out late at night with the dog or in inclement weather. Be prepared to have to care for this animal yourself in some ways.

Punishing children by taking away their own food to show them what it is like not to have food because they forgot to feed the cat or the dog is also cruel and ineffective. You should never use food as a punishment or a reward for children. It is better to take away a privilege for the evening, such as television, as a penalty for forgetting to feed the dog or cat.

You can also take your child to the local library so that they can read up on animal care. Make sure that your children learn as much as possible about the type of pet that they have and the appropriate care. Thanks to the internet, they may even be able to join some sites for children with pet owners and interact with other children who also have pets. As always, when allowing your children to use the internet, use careful supervision.

When you take your pet to the vet, make sure that they children come along, if at all possible. Taking your pet to the vet is part of the process

of caring for the animal and your children should be part of this experience. Make sure that you involve your children in all aspects of the life of your pet as it will not only be a learning experience for your children, but a lesson in caring as well.

In addition to caring for their pets physically, your children must also learn to care for the animals emotionally. This is particularly true in the case of dogs, who really need attention. All too often, children get a dog, enjoy playing with the animal and get bored with the pet. They tend to begin to neglect the animal and no longer want to spend time with their pet. They may go through the motions of taking care of the pet, but they may be fighting you on it and some children will even suggest getting rid of the dog to avoid the work.

Children have to realize, before you get the dog, that getting a pet is not like getting a pen at the store. You don't just toss it out once it runs out of ink. A pet is supposed to be your pet for life. Your children should know, before the pet comes into the house, that this is not just a "whim." That getting an animal is a commitment that is not to be taken lightly. You are talking about the life of a living creature. That kitten or puppy may look cute in the pet store, but once it become a cat or a dog, it may no longer be as amusing. While a cat does not require constant attention, this can be a heartbreaking situation for a dog.

Make sure that your children interact with their pets often and include them in outdoor activities. As your children get older, they may have to spend less time with their pet, as they will have school and friend obligations. This is a natural process of growing up, but they should still make the effort not to neglect their animal companions.

Chapter 12 – The Death Of A Pet

Dogs live on the average about 13 years, depending on the size and the breed. Cats can live for 20 years if kept indoors. Rabbits average around 10 years and other animals live shorter life spans. Chances are, and you hope, that your child will outlive your pet.

The death of a pet is not something that people who have never had pets can understand. They will often suggest just “getting another dog” in an effort to make you feel better and may not be able to understand your grief about losing what they feel is “just an animal.”

During the time that your pet spends in your life, everyone in the family grows attached to the animal. There is a bond between pet owners and their pets that is broken only upon the death of the pet. It is heartbreaking for most adults to have to put their pets to sleep, or to find them dead. It is even worse for children. For many children, this may be their first experience with death.

Never underestimate your child’s grief. Allow them to grieve for the animal that they lost and do not suggest to replace the animal right away. Give them some time to heal. Eventually, they may want to get another pet, but assure them that they are not “replacing” their deceased pet, but that this is a compliment to their deceased pet as the dog or cat or rabbit had been such a good pet that they wanted to have

this experience again.

Your children will not be the only ones who are distraught when the pet dies. Expect yourself to go through a gamut of emotions as well, particularly if you have never before experienced the death of a pet. This loss will affect the entire family, even if it is expected. In many cases, you will have to be the one who will take the dog or the cat to the vet to put it to sleep. It is not advisable to bring young children to witness this. You can simply tell them that the dog or cat went to heaven and is in a better place.

The lesson of death is just one lesson that having pets can teach your children. Most people will say that they get pets for their children to teach them responsibility. But pets teach our children so much more than that. They teach compassion and patience. They also put us into a routine, whether we like it or not, and give us a reason to get out for a walk, in the case of a dog. They teach us unconditional love and demand very little, just a bit of food, water and shelter.

Children who grow up in homes with pets tend to be more compassionate and well rounded than those who grow up without pets. Whether you get a goldfish or a dog, make sure that your child has a pet. Caring for creatures that are smaller and more helpless than them will teach your children how to be more compassionate and caring people. And we can use more compassionate and caring people in the world.