

I am your robot pet!

DISCOVERY ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

- To be able to describe the nature of animals
- To explore the issues of pet ownership and responsibilities towards them
- To recognise the differences between wild and domestic animals
- To identify the needs of pets and companion animals

KEY QUESTIONS

- What is a pet?
- What's the difference between a real pet and a robot pet?
- If you were a pet, how would you want to be treated?
- Can pets meet their needs by themselves?

RESOURCES

- Online resource - Chip the robot dog film
- Large sheet of blank paper
- Post-it notes
- Interactive PDF slides 'I am your robot pet' to guide pupils through the activities

This resource is predominantly aimed at Key Stage 2 pupils. Due to the topics covered in the Compassionate Class programme, it is important to consider how different children may react. For more information on creating a safe teaching and learning environment, see guidance on pages six to eight of the Teacher Overview downloadable at: rspca.org.uk/ccresources.



I am your robot pet!

STIMULUS

Short film about Chip, the robot dog



5
MINS



Start by asking the class: What is a pet? What are the responsibilities of a pet owner? Record their thoughts in the box on slide two or print the slide for pupils to write on. This can be used as a baseline assessment to capture pupils' initial understanding and we encourage you to revisit these thoughts at the end of the session.

Watch the film on slide three together and ask pupils to note down on post-it notes or scrap paper all the things that they notice the robot dog can do.

We have permission from WowWee to show this footage



SLIDE
2-3

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INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

 10
MINS

Display slide four and discuss the information in the fact box with the class.

After a few minutes, ask the children what they think owning a pet means. Use the text box on slide five to record their ideas. After they have made some initial suggestions, use the prompt questions to draw out further responses.

If you are working with lower ability or younger pupils, you could introduce this activity with the smiley face game:

1. Draw a simple smiley face in the middle of the whiteboard. Ask pupils what they need to be happy and healthy and write these around the smiley face. You may need to discuss the difference between needs and wants.
2. Turn the smiley face into the face of an animal by adding ears, whiskers, etc. Ask the children to think about whether the animal needs the same things as humans to be happy and healthy.

PROMPT QUESTIONS

- Should you have a pet if you travel a lot for work?
- Should you have a pet if you don't have a garden?
- When might it not be a good idea to own a pet?
- What responsibilities do we have for different types of pet?
- What would you do if your pet changed its behaviour by drinking water all the time?

 SLIDE
4-5

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PETS FACT BOX

- Like all animals, pets have feelings - they feel pain and can become unhappy
- Pet owners must provide everything the pet needs to survive
- Humans have responsibilities towards all pets because they rely on us in order to be happy and healthy
- We have laws to protect pets as some people don't give their pets everything they need to be happy and healthy. This is being cruel or unkind to animals
- An animal's body language can help to tell you if it is happy or not
- If a pet suddenly changes its normal behaviour or shows signs of fear it could be a sign that the animal is bored, distressed or ill and it should be taken to the vet for a check-up

I am your robot pet!

TASK



5-10
MINS

What have we learned about Chip the robot dog?

Explain to the class that they will be working together to discover the needs of Chip the robot dog from the film stimulus. Ask groups to share their observations about what the robot dog could do, and record these on slide six.

Next, ask them to think about what the robot dog couldn't do that a real dog could. Record these responses on the same slide, and encourage them to discuss and compare the differences.

Note: Make sure children understand that the key difference between the real and robot dog is that animals have feelings that the robot does not. Humans have a responsibility to real pets to make sure they are healthy and happy. Refer back to the pets fact box if needed.

Once you have collated their ideas, remind them of the needs of animals covered in the first session by displaying slide seven as a prompt.

NEEDS OF A REAL DOG



10-20
MINS

Discuss with the class what they think the needs of the robot dog are. Does it have needs that should be met to keep it happy and healthy? Explain that the only needs the robot dog has are not to be dropped or get wet (to prevent it from breaking) and to be charged each night (to keep it running).

Display slide eight and allow a few minutes for groups to think about the needs of a real pet dog, using their knowledge of the needs of animals. Explain that having a pet dog is not just about making sure it survives, but thrives!



SLIDE
6-7



SLIDE
8

I am your robot pet!

NEEDS OF A REAL DOG...CONTINUED

Collate their ideas in the text box on slide eight and summarise by making sure the following have been covered:

- Exercise outdoors every day
- Play and interact with humans and other dogs
- Access to toys and games so they don't get bored
- Comfortable, dry and clean place to sleep
- Balanced diet and access to fresh water
- Regular health check ups with a vet and vaccinations to prevent illness

For lower ability or younger age groups, you could write variations of these statements on the board, leaving gaps for key words that they need to fill in e.g. dogs need ___ outside everyday. They need ___ to play with so they don't get bored.

For more information take a look at the **RSPCA's pet care hints** and their **welfare advice** for pet dog owners and explore the '**children and dogs**' content. There are some useful posters about appropriate ways for children and dogs to interact.

SUMMARISE

Ask the class: How can we know that our pet dogs are healthy and happy?
Encourage them to share responses, using the prompt questions as needed.

PROMPT QUESTIONS

- How do animals communicate?
- Do animals have moods?
- Can animals think for themselves?
- How might an animal behave if you frighten it?
- Why are only some animals usually kept as pets?
- Is a robot pet a substitute for a real pet?

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CLASS DISCUSSION: RESPONSIBILITY



10-20
MINS

Ask children to arrange themselves into a thinking ring. Remind children to listen respectfully to each other, without interruption and to build on the ideas and questions. There isn't necessarily a right or wrong answer, and people may have differing opinions.

KICK OFF QUESTION

- What does it mean to be responsible?

PROMPT QUESTIONS

- Who makes sure that a pet has everything it needs to live?
- Can children be responsible for animals?
- Could you be responsible for a monkey?
- Can a wild animal survive by itself?
- Is it fair to tame a wild animal?
- Do pets have responsibility for anything?

SESSION SUMMARY



5
MINS

Invite the pupils to revisit their initial responses recorded on slide two. Ask each pupil to think of a thought or question from the session that they would like to explore further, or something new they have discovered today. Encourage pupils to share these with the rest of the class and record them under their initial ideas from the start of the lesson. By saving the PDF, you can return to these thoughts in another session.

Prompt them to think about the different responsibilities we would have for a real dog or pet, and the things we get back from owning a pet which make the responsibilities worthwhile.



SLIDE
2

I am your robot pet!

EXTENSION RESOURCES

To take the learning from this discovery session further, you could explore our suggested extension resources.

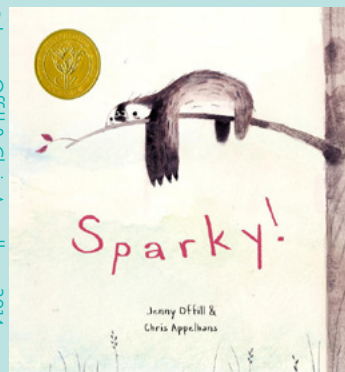
Books



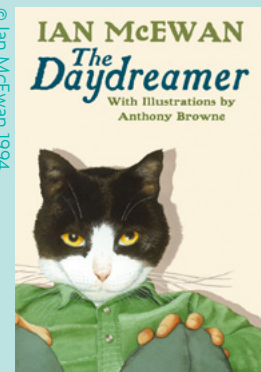
The Wild Robot
by Peter Brown



Children Make Terrible Pets
by Peter Brown



Sparky!
by Jenny Offill
by Chris Appelhans



The Daydreamer
by Ian McEwan

Online Resources

Online content about the future of robot animals and artificial intelligence e.g. **hidden animal camera**.

If you want to inspire your class with more films about animal welfare, take a look at the RSPCA's YouTube channel [youtube.com/rspcauk](https://www.youtube.com/rspcauk)



WHAT NEXT?

If this is your first Discovery activity, pick another stimulating activity to complete with your pupils.

If you've already completed at least two Discovery activities, choose an Advocacy activity that will provide your pupils with an entry for the Compassionate Class competition. We have included suggested Advocacy activities below which link to this Discovery activity.

Advocacy activities

IF YOU LIKED THE 'I AM YOUR ROBOT PET' DISCOVERY ACTIVITY, WHY NOT TRY THESE ACTIVITIES



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ROBOT COMPANION

Children choose a pet, and design a robot companion that meets this animal's needs. Start by explaining what functions the robot companion has to meet the animal's needs, and consider whether there are needs that only a human can meet. Then;

- Write an imaginative story or comic strip about a pet with a companion robot and a human friend, and how the pet feels about them both
- Create posters, film an advert, draw, paint or write an instruction manual for their robot companion, including information about how to meet the real pet's needs
- You could share these with other classes in a school assembly

ADOPT A HUMAN

Imagine that instead of humans choosing pets, pets can choose the humans they want to live with. What sort of owner would the pet choose to make sure their needs are met? Then, either;

- Design adverts from a pet who is seeking a new owner, including information about how their needs can be met, and arrange to present them to another class
- Write an imaginative story or comic strip about a pet searching for a new human owner

