

CARING FOR PETS

DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

Every child is different, and these are only suggested adaptations and activities. Do what works best for encouraging your child's independent exploration during this daily routine. Consult your pediatrician, physical therapist (PT), and/or occupational therapist (OT) first.



Did you know daily routines and activities are a great opportunity to support STEM learning? You can talk about STEM ideas and use STEM words as you go through the day.

Pets are animals that are members of our families. Just like the human members of our families, pets **need food, water, shelter, care, and love**. Some pets need more daily attention than others. Parakeets need fresh water and food every day, but their cages probably only need to be changed once a week. Dogs need fresh food and water every day. They also must be taken outside to go potty several times a day. You and your child can create a task chart of the things your pets need with which your child can help. Set up the chart so there is a row for each pet and a column for each task. Use the visual cues provided or draw the tasks yourselves. Your child can use stickers or stamps or a pencil check mark to document when the task is completed.

ACCESS/ENVIRONMENT

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S LEARNING?

- Place materials and pet toys within reach
- Place task chart where the child can reach



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ADAPTATIONS

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MATERIALS

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S LEARNING?

- Have child's assistive technology ready and available, including augmentative & alternative communication (AAC) device
- Use adaptive devices (e.g., reacher) to help your child pick up pet toys
- Provide a task chart (see following page for example)
- Have a variety of materials available for completing the task chart

INTERACTIONS/INSTRUCTION

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S LEARNING?

Note: Communication may include the use of words, signs, gestures, and different types of cues (e.g., touch, object, movement, visual, etc.)

- Model safe and loving interactions with your pet(s)
- Model documentation of tasks completed in the task chart
- Narrate/sign your child's actions
- Use a variety of methods of communication (e.g., sign language, gestures) to meaningfully engage your child
- Communicate with your child at eye level
- Speak/sign slowly, emphasize keywords, and wait for a response
- Praise your child's efforts with words, facial expression, and/or body language
- Make eye contact and smile as you talk to your child
- Support children with communication challenges and/or visual impairments by using actual objects or pictures to represent steps of the routine
- Consider using visual cues or a tablet with pictures of the objects to signal next steps and/or each step of the sequence (see following pages)
- Use Braille on the visual cue cards to support children with visual impairment
- Model and demonstrate how to do the steps of the routine



Follow your child's lead and interests. Enthusiastically ask your child questions about what they are doing and what they like.



Answer your child's questions. If you do not know the answer, work together with your child to discover the answer.



Encourage your child to participate in the activity as much as possible. Praise your child's efforts and successes.

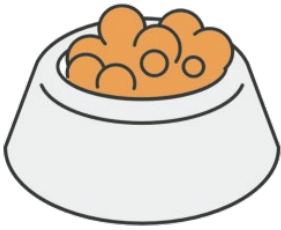


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VISUAL CUES

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- Help family member give pet food and water



- Gently play with AFTER the pet is done eating



- Check with family member if pet needs anything else (e.g., bath, go outside, go on a walk, be brushed)



CARING FOR PETS TASK CHART

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Daily Task	Give Food & Water	Play With/Walk	Cleaning
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			



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EXPLORATION I

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Pet Sounder

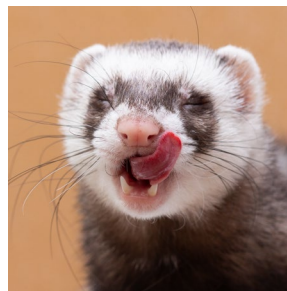
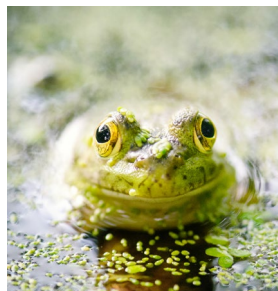
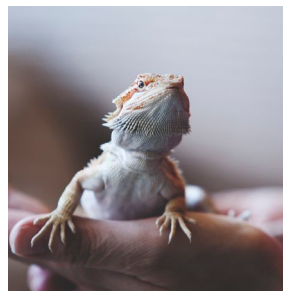
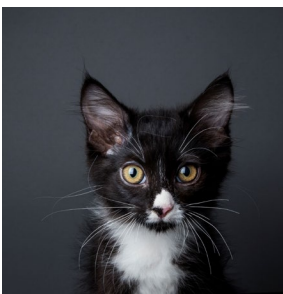
Description: Help your child notice and make **sounds** their pet(s) make. Also encourage your child to imitate and make sounds while playing with stuffed and/or toy animals.

What My Child Is Learning!

Children learn best by interacting with people and objects. Introduce STEM words, ask questions, and encourage them to make a connection between animals and sounds and real-life experiences, while developing creativity and collaboration skills.

While playing stuffed/toy animals or caring for family pet(s), describe what sounds the animal makes. Say, for example, "The cat says, 'Meow'."

While children are learning how to express words, they may already have numerous ways to communicate! Watch for their cues as they may express their curiosity and interest by turning toward or pointing to the stuffed/toy animal or family pet. Using open-ended questions offers an opportunity for children to explore the stuffed/toy animal that they are interested in.





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EXPLORATION II

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Pet Carer

Description: Talk about how family pets are *living things*. Just like humans, pets *need food, water, shelter*, and care.

What My Child Is Learning!

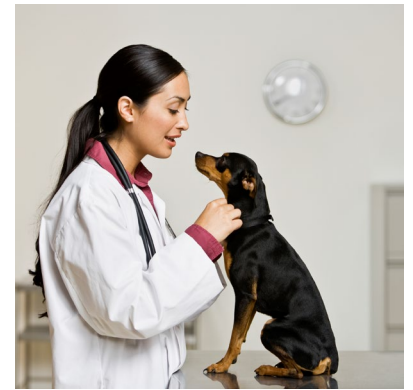
Children learn best by interacting with people and objects. Introduce STEM words, ask questions, and encourage them to make a connection between animals and real-life experiences, while developing creativity and collaboration skills.

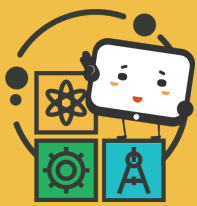
Encourage and demonstrate how to gently interact with your family pet.

Talk about some pets have certain characteristics. Say, *"Birds have beaks and talons."* *"Cats and dogs are furry and have paws."*

You and your child can *plan and carry out a schedule* for your pet to make sure they have their needs met. Your child can document and record what the pet ate/drank, if the pet went for a walk, and other elements of the schedule.

Pretend with your child that they are a veterinarian caring for animals. You can use stuffed animals or other objects to discuss different animals' needs and how to help the animals feel better if they are sick.





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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

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- Visit a pet store and/or animal shelter
- If you have a dog, give the dog a bath
- Make origami pets
- Pretend play with friends taking care of pets or running a vet clinic
- Design and build a bird feeder
- Create a pet journal, add graphs, drawings, observations, photos...
- Design and build a bird house or other animal habitats
- Talk about the variety of pets (e.g., dog, cat, bird, frog, turtle, snake, bunny, mouse, gerbil, ferret, ants, worms...)
- Check out our Storybook Conversations for *Feathers and Hair, What Animals Wear* by Jennifer Ward
- Check out these books about pets:
 - *See How They Grow: Pets* by DK
 - *Caring for Your Pets* by Ann Owen
 - *The Perfect Pet* by Margie Palatini

