

This set of stone animals will help to develop children's listening and speaking skills as they work together to use the stones to tell stories. Such small world adventures will enable children to explore story structure and use vocabulary learned from other stories. The set can also be used as a springboard for learning more about pets and how to care for them. Set contains eight pets: dog, cat, fish, guinea pig, hamster, rabbit, snake and tortoise.



Key vocabulary

- Dog, cat, fish, guinea pig, hamster, rabbit, snake and tortoise
- Sort
- Compare
- Similarities
- Differences
- Different from
- Similar to
- Mammal, fish, reptile, amphibian, bird

Activity ideas

- Create play dough versions of the pets by stamping them into the dough and cutting them out. Extend this by encouraging the children to make new pets with the dough.
- To help with children's spatial reasoning, play a game of 'Where's my Pet?' Place one of the stones on top of, above, on, under, below, by the side of, next to, and so on. Ask the children to describe the pet's position in relation to objects around it. Focus on the vocabulary used. Allow children to take turns at placing the animal.
- Sort the pets by different criterion: number of legs, whether they have claws, cold-blooded/warm-blooded. Apply this knowledge to other collections of animal soft toys or photographs of animals.
- Invite pet owners to visit (with their pet if appropriate) to explain the lessons they have learned from their pets
- Invite a vet in to explain what they do and how to care for pets, including what to feed them. Encourage the children to ask appropriate questions and use new vocabulary.
- Adopt a soft toy as a pet for a week, applying the lessons learned from the visits above



- Challenge children to build a suitable home for a toy pet dog. Provide a range of construction materials to choose from, asking the children for the reasons for their choices. This can be repeated for the other stones in the set.
- Create a role-play area of a veterinary surgery, allowing the children to invent and recount stories, and work together
- Decorate pasta shapes and thread them onto string to make snakes. This idea works with paper chains too. Both versions will help children to follow directions and explain their actions.
- Crafty Cats: Muddle up some lengths of wool that the children need to unpick
- Daft dogs: Follow some muddy paw prints to find the sock/hat/shoe the dog has stolen.



Extending the learning

- Research the senses of different animals – smell for a dog; hearing for a cat; and so on – and compare findings with our own senses.

Children's books featuring pets

The Foolish Tortoise by Eric Carle

A Dog With Nice Ears by Lauren Child

I Completely Know About Guinea Pigs by Lauren Child

Oi Dog! by Kes Gray and Jim Field

Tabby McTat by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler

The Snake Who Came to Stay by Julia Donaldson and Hannah Shaw

Tiddler by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler

Guess How Much I Love You by Sam McBratney and Anita Jeram

Conker the Chameleon by Hannah Peckham and Stephanie Jayne

Up Hamster Down Hamster by Kass Reich

They all Saw a Cat by Brendan Wenzel

Harry the Dirty Dog by Gene Zion and Margaret Bloy Graham