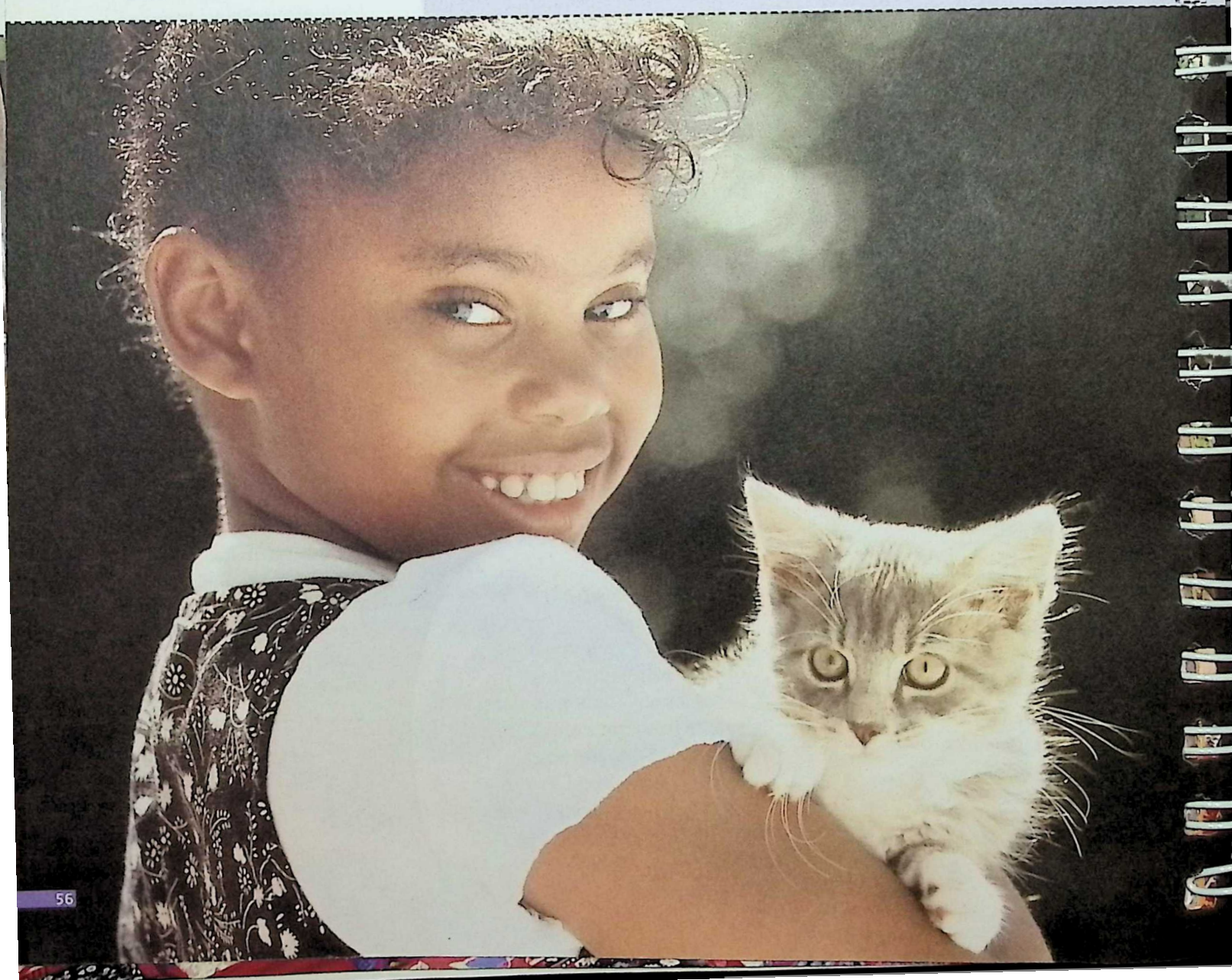
Pet Care



Owning a pet can be great fun, but it's also a big responsibility. Find out if that responsibility is what you really want. Do you already own a pet? Find out how to be your pet's best friend with these activities.





1. To Have or to Have Not?
Identify four animals that would make good pets for you. Then identify four animals that wouldn't make good pets. Consider each animal's daily needs, how well it would fit in with your home life, the cost of keeping it, and how long it generally lives.

2. Be Responsible
Take responsibility for a pet—yours or someone else's—for two weeks. Provide shelter, food, exercise, water, and grooming. Did you spend more or less time caring for the pet than you thought you would? Which tasks were fun? Which ones weren't so much fun?

3. Add It Up
What's the cost of owning a pet? Figure this out for a pet you have now, or for an animal you'd like to have as a pet. What does the pet eat? How much does it eat? Does it need a special place to live? What will that space cost? What are its medical needs? Does it require special equipment, like a leash (dogs), a litter box (cats), a saddle (a horse), or an air pump (tropical fish)? Does your community have any laws regarding that animal? Are there fees? Figure out the daily, monthly, and yearly costs for the animal.

4. Facts of Life
Is your pet male or female? If female, how many young could your pet produce at a time? How many pregnancies would be possible in a lifetime for your pet? Would you be able to take care of that many animals? Or find good homes for them? What does a vet or an animal shelter recommend?

5. Staying Healthy
Find out about illnesses that are common for your pet. How can you prevent them? What are their warning signs? How can they be avoided or treated? Learn how to give medicine to a pet, if possible, and how to seek emergency treatment for your pet.

6. Don't Pass It On
Identify two diseases that pets can get or spread, such as tick-borne Lyme disease, tularemia (rabbit fever), or rabies. Find out what is being done to control these diseases and what you can do to prevent your pet from getting them. Do something that will help educate people about a pet disease or help prevent a common pet disease.

7. Healthy Diet
What is a good diet for your pet? Collect ads for pet food. What information do they give you about the nutritional needs of your animal? Read labels on pet food containers and compare them for food values.

8. Animal Talk
How do you communicate with a pet? How do you show a pet what you want it to do? How does your pet communicate what it wants? Describe some specific behaviors that your pet uses to communicate anger, fear, hunger, and loyalty.

9. Book It
Create a scrapbook about your pet. Include pictures from when it joined your family until the present. Write about how you felt when you got your pet. Keep licenses, vaccination forms, and other emergency information in the scrapbook, too. If you don't own a pet, create a scrapbook for the type of animal you'd like to have.

10. Other Ways to Be Around Animals
Find out about groups and places that care for pets in your area. Are there rescue societies? A foster care program at an animal shelter? A zoo mentorship program? A bird rehabilitation clinic? Is there a group that fits your interests and abilities where you could volunteer? Share what you've discovered with a parent or guardian.