



How Pets Benefit Our Children

Pets can be a big responsibility. There's feeding, vet bills, pet deposits, etc. It's not a commitment to enter into lightly. However, if you can do so, research shows that adding a pet to your family can be a great opportunity to support your child's development. Here are a few benefits for children when they have a furry best friend:

- *Responsibility and self-esteem:* Although caregivers are the ones that will likely provide most of the care, children can be assigned important responsibilities. They can help fill the water bowl, measure and pour the pet food, help give baths, and take time to play with the pet.
- *Nurturing and empathy:* Caregivers can encourage children to use gentle touch and care when interacting with the family pet. Studies show that children who grow up with pets often have more empathy. By learning to be careful and kind to their pet, they learn to be careful and kind to others.
- *Friendship and support:* Pets provide friendship for children. They offer unconditional love and support. When children experience difficult days, pets are there when they get home, ready to greet and cuddle with them.
- *Stress reduction:* Petting animals can help promote calm. Having a pet nearby to reach over and pet or hug during homework time can be a real plus.



References: Hamer, Chris (N.D.). *Six Reasons Why Pets are Good for Kids*. Reader's Digest Canada. <https://www.readersdigest.ca/home-garden/pets/6-reasons-why-pets-are-good-kids/>; Masters, Maria. (2019, April 23). *The Benefits of Pets for Kids*. <https://www.whattoexpect.com/family/kids-and-pets/benefits-of-pets/>; Trautner, Tracy. Michigan State University Extension. (2017, December 14). https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/the_benefits_of_a_family_pet.