



PENNY'S PALS ACTIVITY: OUR NEIGHBOR'S PETS

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AUDIENCE: AGES 4 – ADULT

CORE COMPETENCIES TARGETED: Responsible and irresponsible pet care and the consequences of each, problem solving.

OBJECTIVE:

Children will recall, summarize, and interpret information from material presented visually. They will participate in a cooperative group activity to apply collaborative skills (e.g., making eye contact, waiting turns, listening, taking others' ideas into account, explaining clearly, restating) to their reading, writing, listening and viewing. They will participate as contributors and act as leaders in a group discussion. Children will also understand cause and effect, the relations between events.

MATERIALS:

- 11" X 17" copies of "our Neighbors' Pets" poster
- Kitchen timer or stopwatch
- Writing paper
- Pencils

ACTIVITY:

Preliminary Discussion

Advise the children that we're going to do an exercise that will help us all to understand responsible and irresponsible pet care and the consequences of each. Tell them that irresponsible pet care can lead to dangerous situations and other problems for animals and people.

Procedure

- Divide the class into groups of 2 to 5 students and distribute a poster to each. Instruct students to look carefully at their poster for a full minute. Set a timer for 60 seconds, then collect the posters and set them aside.
- Give each group a sheet of paper and a pencil. Tell students that they should have noticed several examples of irresponsible pet care in the poster: cases where pets were not given the kind of care that people should give them. (Remind them that irresponsible pet care can lead to dangerous situations and other problems for animals and people.) Give them five minutes to write down as many examples of irresponsible pet care as they can remember from the poster. Members will work together to share and record information. They may want to appoint one person to do the writing. Set a timer for 5 minutes and then collect all the pencils.
- Take a poll to see how many examples of irresponsible pet care students recognized and recalled. Which group claims to have identified and remembered the most? (The total is 16.) Call on students to read from their lists. As they do, ask other groups to indicate by a show of hands whether they, too, identified that specific example. Discuss each example that students identify. Ask questions such as, "How is this an example of irresponsible pet care? What can go wrong when . . . people don't spay or neuter their cat? . . . A cat gets into someone's trash? . . . A dog is left in a parked car? . . . What would be a more responsible way of caring for that animal?" (See answer key.)
- Once all examples have been discussed, redistribute posters and ask each student to identify and explain any other examples they might have missed. Point out that most of the animals in this scene are not wearing a collar or tags – a major problem for any pet, especially one who is roaming outdoors. License and ID tags identify pets that are lost and can be traced by animal care and control officers to the person who cares for that pet. Without tags, the task for identifying a pet's home is often impossible.

- Remind students that the animals in this poster are not at fault for the problems they might be causing or encountering. In most cases, they are only behaving in ways that are natural to them. The responsibility for a pet lies with the people who take care of him. People must do their best to ensure that their pets are happy, healthy and safe and that they don't hurt, frighten or bother others.

- Have the children study "our Neighbors' Pets" once more and identify examples of **responsible** pet care. They are as follows:

Girl walking a cat on a leash. With patience and gentle guidance from their caregivers, cats can be trained to walk on leashes with harnesses.

Boy walking a dog on a leash. This dog is safe from traffic and other dangers. He appears well-trained (he isn't tugging on the leash) and is wearing a collar and tags. He is getting fresh air and exercise without scaring or bothering anyone.

Boy hanging "lost dog" posters. Although responsible caregivers don't usually lose their pets, accidents do happen – and responsible people do their best to locate their stray pets. Putting up posters with a photograph and information about a lost pet is an important step toward finding the animal. Contact all animal shelters and animal control agencies (or, if none exist, police departments) within a 60-mile radius is critical as well. File lost pet reports with those agencies and visit or call them each day.

Answer Key

1. Dog leaving home through open door. A door or window carelessly left open is an invitation for a pet to go outdoors unattended. Pets may then get lost or injured.

Solution: Windows, doors, fences, and gates should be checked to be sure that pets cannot escape.

2., 3., 4., 5., 6., 7., 8., 9. Dog growling at a mail carrier. Dog running in front of cyclist. Dog following girls on sidewalk. Cats fighting. Dog jumping on child with ice cream cone. Dogs chasing cat in the street. Dog digging in grass. Cats around trash can. People should not allow their pets to roam. Roaming pets may scare or bother people, get into fights or chase other animals, damage property, or get hurt in traffic. They are also at risk of catching diseases or being lost, poisoned, trapped, or injured by broken glass and other sharp objects.

Solution: Cats and dogs should be kept indoors or fenced yard or walked on a leash.

10. Cat in tree next to bird's nest. Free-roaming cats are a nuisance to wildlife, often killing backyard songbirds. Despite the myths, cats do not have nine lives or always land on their feet.

Solution: Cats should be walked on a leash or kept indoors or in a safe cat enclosure.

11. Girl giving away free kittens. There are many more kittens and puppies than there are good, responsible homes to go around. As a result, millions of pets are abandoned at animal shelters each year. Also, a child should not be giving away kittens simply to anyone who wants one.

Solution: The responsible thing for people to do is spay or neuter their cats and dogs at an early age to prevent more litters of homeless kittens and puppies. We must make sure that pets are adopted to loving, responsible homes – not given away to strangers who may be cruel to or irresponsible with them.

12. Dog left in parked car. On a warm day, the temperature in a parked car can reach 120 degrees in just a few minutes, -- even when the windows are partly open -- causing an animal inside to suffer brain damage or die from suffocation or heatstroke. Pets in cars may also frighten people as they try to protect their

vehicles from passersby. In addition, pets that are left unattended in cars are at risk of being stolen.

Solution: If possible, leave pets at home when you are running short errands. Hire a pet sitter, if necessary, to watch your pets for longer periods of time.

13. Cat sleeping under a car. Cats allowed outdoors often seek out the warmth of an engine or wheel well or the cool shade under a car. Unfortunately, drivers don't always see cats sleeping in or under their cars, and cats don't always hear people before the engine starts. Cats are often hurt or killed because they've been caught inside or underneath a moving car.

Solution: Cats should be kept indoors. Drivers can also take precautions such as banging loudly on the hood of their cars before starting it; that will often wake a napping critter who might have taken shelter under a wheel.

14. Dog rummaging through trash. This dog may either be a stray (lost) or may have been abandoned by the owner. Dogs that are lost or abandoned are often hungry and must search for their own food. Rummaging through trash exposes them to the risk of disease and injury. It is also a nuisance for people who are stuck cleaning up their messes.

Solution: Every dog needs a responsible caregiver to provide food, water, exercise, and a safe, loving home. If you see a dog without a person, call your animal shelter or police department for help.

15. Cat going to the bathroom on someone's lawn. When people let their pets roam, those animals often make a mess of sidewalks, yards, gardens and other places.

Solution: The responsible thing to do is to keep cats indoors and provide a litter box and training. Cats may also be walked on leashes, and their caregivers must be responsible for cleaning up after them.

16. Cat stuck on roof. See #10.

Our Neighbors' Pets



