

Vail School District
4th Grade
Practice Prompt #1
Informational

DIRECTIONS: Read the writing prompt and excerpts below. Then use scratch paper for your prewriting/planning and your draft.

Experts state that owning a pet is a very positive and healthy thing for people. Read the two articles below on owning a dog or a cat. Write an expository essay to your community explaining how having these animals as pets is helpful to human beings.

Your writing should:

- . Include a clear beginning, middle, and end
- . Include a beginning that grabs the reader's attention
- . Include important details from the articles
- . Use supporting words and phrases

Remember to edit for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.

Why Man's Best Friend is a Man's Best Friend

Drs. Foster and Smith, Educational Staff

For over 15,000 years dogs have worked to earn the distinction of being "man's best friend." Dogs have not only offered love and affection, but worked side-by-side with humans for centuries. A vast assortment of studies have been conducted to research the benefits of owning a dog as a pet.

Owning a dog has many health benefits. Taking care of a dog has been shown to reduce stress and decrease blood pressure. Because dogs require regular daily exercise, humans get regular exercise as well, and have a greater physical activity level. In some situations, a dog can be trained to assist humans who have regular seizures. The dogs are able to sense a seizure 15-45 minutes before it actually occurs, and can warn its owner that a seizure may be coming soon.

Children often turn to their dog for comfort if a friend or family member dies or leaves the family. Grieving adults who did not have a close source of human support were also found to have less depression if they had a dog. Dogs can help us relax and focus our attention away from our problems. Dogs decrease our feelings of loneliness and isolation by offering comfort to people of all ages. They also help us feel needed and have something to care for, and bring consistency to the lives of their owners by needing to be cared for with the same routine every day.

Having a dog also gives their owners someone to talk to, and to talk about. Families who purchased a dog reported feeling happier after adding a pet to the family. Patients in a veterans' hospital talked more actively and frequently to each other when a dog was present in the room than when there wasn't.

Is there any wonder that the bond which began more than 15,000 years ago still exists today? Dogs have an extraordinary effect on many aspects of the human condition. Their ability to act the clown, be non-judgmental, help us feel needed, offer unconditional love and trust, provide an ear to our troubles, and warm fuzzy fur to hold and stroke ensures them the well-deserved title of "man's best friend."

Source: <http://www.drsfostersmith.com/pic/article.cfm?aid=1201>

Scientific Benefits of Cat Ownership

Kathy Benjamin, Austin Thompson

Studies have shown that just watching cat videos on the internet can boost a person's energy and create positive emotions—so it's no surprise that actual cat ownership has a number of benefits. Here are a few.

If you're worried about your use of the earth's resources, it's better to own a cat than a dog. A 2009 study found that the resources needed to feed a dog over the course of its life create the same eco-footprint as that of a large car. Meanwhile, cats—which eat less in general and are more likely to eat fish than corn- or beef-flavored products—only have the approximate carbon footprint of a small vehicle.

Losing a loved one is incredibly painful, but one of the best ways of coping is to own a pet. Cats have been shown to help people get over their loss more quickly, and show less physical symptoms of pain, like crying. Despite the fact that they are only animals, cats serve as a social support during difficult times. People in mourning report talking to their pet to work out their feelings, since it is often easier to talk to something that won't respond and can't judge than to another human being.

Owning any pet is good for your heart. Cats in particular lower your stress level—possibly since they don't require as much effort as dogs—and lower the amount of anxiety in your life. Petting a cat has a positive calming effect. One study found that over a 10-year period cat owners were 30 percent less likely to die of a heart attack or stroke than non-cat owners (although this might just be because cat owners are more relaxed and have lower stress in general).

Several studies and polls in the United Kingdom have found that people (especially women) prefer to sleep with their cats, and they even report sleeping better with a cat than with a human. A recent study from the Mayo Clinic Center for Sleep Medicine indicates that they might be on to something: 41 percent of the people in that study indicated that they slept better because of their pet, while only 20 percent said that it led to disturbances.

Owning a cat means much more than just have an animal to pet and feed. Cats give their owners many health benefits. Cats may have “nine lives”, but they make the life of a human much, much better!

Source: <http://mentalfloss.com/article/51154/10-scientific-benefits-being-cat-owner>

DIRECTIONS:

Now write your final copy on the following pages.

FINAL COPY
