

#LifeGoesONline

Bringing Life Science Centre to you!



Alreet pet?

Animal science at home



Scientists study animals to learn about their behaviour in the wild and at home. If you have a pet, you can study animal behaviour too! Our pets aren't able to put on safety goggles or take measurements so we study them by watching their behaviour and designing simple experiments for them. This is also a really good way of practicing lots of scientific skills like observation, recording results and making predictions.

Watching closely

The simplest way to study an animal is to sit quietly and note down what it does over a period of time. For example, watch your dog for five minutes and note down all its behaviours: sat down, went for a drink, sat down again, scratched its ear.

Instead of sitting watching your pet for hours, you might set a timer and check in on it every 5 minutes.



Giving them a choice

Animals can't talk to us, so we use "Choice experiments" to understand what animals prefer.

Pick 2 or 3 things to test so that you don't confuse your pet with too many choices.

For example, if you have a rabbit you could put carrots in one corner of its hutch and lettuce in the other corner and see which one it prefers to eat.

Or you could give your pet two different kinds of bedding and see which it chooses to rest on.



If you don't have a pet

- If you have a garden, you can observe birds or insects.
- If you and your family go walking you can observe the animals you pass in the park.
- You can also study birds, squirrels and hedgehogs in long videos online where people have recorded their gardens.



“Talking points”

- Did you learn anything new about your pet?
- Can you make a bar graph showing your pet's behaviours and how often they happened?
- What would you change if you were doing this experiment again?



Safety

- Pets are living things and so don't always do what you want – don't get mad at them if they decide they don't want to join in.
- Make sure your experiments won't hurt or upset your pet and don't offer your pet anything to eat that you wouldn't normally give them. It might make them sick.

Check out other activities to try at home on our website and send us a message if there's anything you want to see us cover!



Life[™]

SCIENCE FOR ALL