

OPERATION G.A.P. (Get A Pet)

Activities inspired by the books
Pet That Dog! by Gideon Kidd and Rachel
Braunigan and *Pet That Cat!* by Nigel Kidd
and Rachel Braunigan

A Letter from Rachel Braunigan to Guardians

Dear Guardian,

I have a lot of experience convincing a parent to bring an animal into the home. I grew up as the child who repeatedly begged their mother for permission to bring home every animal; my childhood included dogs and cats, baby birds who fell from the nest, an injured pigeon I nursed back to health, and field mice I decided needed a home indoors, and more! Which is why it feels like karma that I have four children who have a love of animals and have frequently asked to bring home every kind of animal imaginable.

As a parent, I've realized we can't bring home each and every animal. But I also know the many valuable lessons having a pet can teach children. Caring for a pet teaches a child about love and the ability to nurture and care for others. They feel the effects as we do this for them, but a pet allows them to put this skill into practice for themselves. It also teaches responsibility, as they learn to feed, walk, brush, train, and clean up after their pets. It teaches our kids empathy and how to be a good friend.

So, what do you do when your child is begging for the dog or cat they saw at the shelter? Only you can decide if getting a pet is the right decision for your family. Before you give in and say yes, there are ways to find out if a specific pet is a good fit for your home. Many shelters have foster programs that allow you to bring a pet into your home without a commitment to adopt. This helps a pet in need and it provides necessary support for shelters and rescues. Adopting a pet is a commitment for the life of that animal, so it is not a decision to be taken lightly. Fostering benefits everyone.

Pet That Dog! and *Pet That Cat!* were both written by kids for kids. My sons Gideon and Nigel wrote them for kids much like themselves: animal lovers who want to learn more about dogs and cats. The books can help you and your child understand all the things a pet needs before you bring them home. We hope these books help kids become a better caregiver to their canine and feline pets. My kids hope the knowledge in these books helps kids convince their parents to let them bring home a new friend. I hope you at least consider saying yes.

From,
Rachel Braunigan

A Letter from Gideon Kidd to Dog Lovers

Dear Dog Lover,

I am here to help you convince your parents to get a dog. I know a lot about dogs, and I also know a lot about convincing parents.

In my experience, the most important thing about asking your parents for something is asking at the right time. It's never a good idea to ask them when they are busy or cranky. It also helps to ask them after you have been an exceptionally good kid that day. If you mowed the lawn or took out the trash without asking, they are going to think that you are a really good kid. This will make it harder for them to say no!

When it is the perfect time to ask, come prepared with your dog research! Parents love to ask questions, so make sure you have thought of everything! Dogs require a lot of time and care. They need food, water, baths and grooming, play time, training, and vet care. Most of all, they need your love.

In *Pet That Dog! A Handbook for Making Four-Legged Friends*, you can find all the information you need to convince your parents that you are ready for the responsibility of a dog. With my dog, Cookie, I am responsible for feeding him twice a day. I take turns with my brothers bringing him outside to go to the bathroom. I give him regular walks and play with him to make sure he gets his energy out. I also had to train him to come when called, sit, and lie down. He is worth all the effort because he is my best friend.

I hope your Operation G.A.P. is a success! I can't wait to see pictures of you and your new furry friend!

From,
Gideon Kidd
@IvePetThatDog on Twitter



A Letter from Nigel Kidd to Cat Lovers

Dear Cat Lover,

When you approach your parents to talk about getting a cat, it is important to make sure they are paying attention. I think it helps to start off by sharing a very good feline fact with them. This tells them you have done your research about cats, and parents love it when their kids show they have learned something new. Your next step should be to let them know the many benefits of having a cat. I think you should just bring these up throughout the day.

These first two steps will get your parents thinking about a cat, but the final step is convincing them to let you get one. Most parents want kids to be able to take care of a cat before they bring one home. Learning these things is a lot of responsibility, but it is worth it! By caring for a cat, you are not only giving an animal a home, but you are also making a best friend.

Pet That Cat! A Handbook for Making Feline Friends can help you with Operation G.A.P. You can learn how to pet a cat, how to pick one up (if you dare!), all about food, cat litter, keeping your cat healthy, and how to play with your cat. Even if you know a lot about cats, you are sure to learn something new!

Good luck, kid cat lover! If your mission is a success, I'd love to see pictures of your new feline friend. Message me on Twitter or Instagram, and your cat could be featured on I've Pet That Cat!

From,
Nigel Kidd
@IvePetThatCat1 on Twitter



Discussion Questions for Guardians and Kids

Having a pet requires a lot of responsibility, but is also a lot of fun! Guardians and kids, sit down together and talk through these discussion questions to see if you are ready to introduce your new furry best friend to your family.

- Pets come in all shapes and sizes—and personalities! What pet personality traits would best match our family dynamics?
- You can't always plan the future, but can we predict any big changes to our current home environment in the next five to ten years? How could that affect a pet?
- What will each of our daily responsibilities be to care for a pet? What are some ways we can keep track of these?
- How will we hold ourselves and each other accountable for our responsibilities?
- What are our options for pet care if something takes us away from home for days at a time, like a family trip?
- Can we handle the cost of a pet's food and supplies, grooming, boarding while we are on vacation, vet bills, et cetera? What if there is an unexpected expense when the pet gets sick?
- Should we get a puppy/kitten, or an adult dog/cat? Should we get a senior pet? Would we consider adopting a bonded pair?
- If owning a pet is too big a commitment right now, is fostering a pet the right choice for our family? What shelters near us offer foster programs?

To learn more about cats and how to support your local rescues and shelters, read Nigel's interview with Erin Mayes, a cat behavior specialist who works for PAWS Chicago, a no-kill shelter and rescue, on pages 88–93 of *Pet That Cat!*

Operation G.A.P. Checklist

It is always a good idea to be prepared! Fill out the checklist below with items you will need to buy to take care of a pet.

☐ Food and water bowls

☐ Collar

☐ Leash or litter box

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐

☐



Responsibility List

Who will own each responsibility? Guardians and kids, use the list below to decide who will be responsible for each task.

_____ will be responsible for feeding our pet in the morning.

_____ will be responsible for feeding our pet in the evening.

_____ will be responsible for cleaning up after our pet.

_____ will be responsible for scheduling vet appointments.

_____ will be responsible for _____
_____.

_____ will be responsible for _____
_____.

_____ will be responsible for _____
_____.

_____ will be responsible for _____
_____.

Write a Persuasive Letter to Your Guardian

Never underestimate a well-written persuasive letter or essay. Show your guardian that you are responsible and can take care of a pet with the help of this fill-in-the-blank guide and information from *Pet That Dog!* or *Pet That Cat!*.

Dear _____ ,

I would like to welcome a new pet into our home and feel that I am ready to take on the responsibility of being a pet owner. I have done a lot of research about owning a **dog** / **cat** (circle one) and am excited to share my knowledge with you.

Dogs / **Cats** (circle one) make excellent pets because _____

_____.

One fun fact I learned about **dogs** / **cats** (circle one) is _____

_____.

I think a pet with a **social and playful** / **quiet and independent** (circle one) personality will suit our home and family because _____

_____.

Write a Persuasive Letter to Your Guardian (continued)

My daily responsibilities for our pet would include _____

We can work together as a family to care for our pet by _____

In conclusion, I feel that am ready to take care of a pet because _____



Praise for Pet That Dog!

"A fun book for dog lovers or those hoping to love a dog soon."

—School Library Journal



About Pet That Dog!

Pet That Dog! A Handbook for Making Four-Legged Friends is an illustrated guide for young readers to meeting, petting, and caring for dogs of all shapes, sizes, and personalities, written by Gideon Kidd and his mom, Rachel Braunigan.



Gideon Kidd is a 13-year-old boy from Iowa. He began documenting each dog he petted by posting pictures and stories about them online. He has now pet over 1,000 dogs and has over 300,000 Twitter followers. Gideon loves dogs and hopes to meet and pet as many as he can. Follow along on Twitter @IvePetThatDog, Instagram @_ivepetthatdog, and his website ivepetthatdog.com.

Praise for Pet That Cat!

"A wonderful interactive guide . . . a great resource for young readers wanting to learn all about cats."

—Modern Cat



About Pet That Cat!

Pet That Cat! A Handbook for Making Feline Friends is a fun and informative illustrated guide for young readers to understanding, befriending, and caring for cats, written by Nigel Kidd and his mom, Rachel Braunigan.



Nigel Kidd is a 12-year-old boy from Iowa. He loves cats and makes as many feline friends as he can. Nigel shares stories about feline friends he meets online and in real life on the Twitter and Instagram accounts I've Pet That Cat, the companion to the viral Twitter account I've Pet That Dog by his older brother Gideon.

Rachel Braunigan is Gideon's and Nigel's mom. A social worker turned stay-at-home mom, she has four sons. Rachel assists Nigel and Gideon with their projects by taking pictures and helping in the never-ending quest to pet more cats and dogs.