

TAKE
A SIDE

Debate

Directions: Read the article. Study the facts. Decide what you think. Go to www.scholastic.com/storyworks for more debates!



Cats vs. Dogs

The cutest battle ever **By Justin O'Neill**

It's on: the ultimate pet showdown, a battle between dogs and cats. Sure, they're both adorable. Yes, they're both cuddly. But which one makes the best pet? Are dogs really top dog? Are cats really, er, the cat's meow?

Puppy Love

More than half of American families have one or the other, but dogs win when it comes to popularity. Dog freaks outnumber cat fans by almost two-to-one.

All this doggy devotion may have something to do with dogs' big brainpower. "The average dog can learn 165 words; that's equivalent to the vocabulary of a 2-year-old child," says Stanley Coren, an animal-behavior expert, in *Parade* magazine. Dog lovers say this makes canines especially aware of what's going on in the human world. Feline vocabularies can't compete—cats can learn about 35 words.

Another reason to love dogs? They work hard. Dogs have helped people herd cows and sheep for ages, but now these four-legged friends do more than ever. They guide the blind, hunt criminals, detect termites and gas leaks, and can even smell cancer in medical patients.

Cats are good hunters, but they are way less energetic. In fact, the average house cat spends 80 percent of the day lounging and sleeping.

Purrfect Pals

For such snoozy animals, cats are surprisingly independent creatures. Most dogs rely on humans for food, exercise, bathing, and



constant affection. Put out food and a litter box, and most cats are happy just to hang out.

Not to mention, kitties are a real bargain. Including food, toys, and vet visits over a lifetime, the cost of caring for a cat is about one sixth of usual dog expenses.

And when cats do get moving, these little acrobats are amazingly agile. "Cats are very nimble, with great balance," says veterinarian Michael Garvey in *Parade*. "I've seen cats that have fallen more than 32 stories and didn't have serious fractures." It's part of why cats are said to have nine lives. (They typically live about three or four years longer than dogs.)

The Fight Rages On

The battle may never have a winner. Some people love both, and others seem to have a natural preference—an "animal" instinct—for one.

Not sure if you're a cat or a dog person? That's OK; there's a right pet for everyone.

You could always be a boa-constrictor or hermit-crab person instead. ■

Miss Our No-Sweat Bubble Test?
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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Which pet wins?

Go back to the article and find information to support each side. Write the information on the lines below.

DOGS Loyal best friends!

- 1 _____

- 2 _____

- 3 _____

CATS Calm, cool companions!

- 1 _____

- 2 _____

- 3 _____

Study the points on both sides of the argument—and think about your own opinion. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become the thesis statement for an essay on this topic.

GET THIS ACTIVITY ONLINE

Write a Persuasive Essay

Directions: Read the article "Cats vs. Dogs" on pages 26-27 of the February/March 2012 issue of *Storyworks*. Fill in the chart on page 27. Then follow the steps below to write a persuasive essay expressing your opinion on which animal wins the "best pet" award.

STEP 1: CHOOSE YOUR SIDE

A persuasive essay is all about expressing a strong opinion and trying to convince your readers to agree with you. So your first step is to decide whether you think cats or dogs win the debate. **Check the box next to the point of view you will support in your essay.**

Cats!

Dogs!

STEP 2: WRITE A TOPIC SENTENCE

The topic sentence is where you tell your reader what the essay is going to be about. In a persuasive essay, it's where you state your opinion—strongly! **Write your topic sentence on the lines below, stating that either cats or dogs are the better pet. The exact wording is up to you.**

Your topic sentence: _____

STEP 3: SUMMARIZE THE ISSUE

Let the reader know a little bit about the issue you will be addressing. This is not your opinion; it's just a brief summary of the issue. In this case, you want to explain that cats and dogs, both very popular pets, can be compared in several ways.

Your summary of the issue: _____

Write a Persuasive Essay cont'd

STEP 4: FIND YOUR SUPPORT

Guess what? You already did this part! Your three supporting points are listed in either the “Cats” or “Dogs” column on page 27. Copy your three points onto the numbered lines below. In the next paragraph of your essay, you will state your three supporting points. After each one, you should add details to illustrate or prove the point. Write a detail supporting each point on the “Detail” lines below.

1. _____

Detail: _____

2. _____

Detail: _____

3. _____

Detail: _____

STEP 5: MENTION THE OTHER SIDE

Pick one of the strongest points from the other side of the argument. Then think of a way to make that idea seem wrong or flawed. Write two to three sentences explaining the point and why you think it is wrong.

Argument against the other side (rebuttal): _____

STEP 6: WRITE A CONCLUSION

The last paragraph of your essay is the conclusion. You should write two to three sentences that restate your main points—but don’t add any new ideas. Remember, this is the last thing your readers will see, so make sure to leave them convinced that your argument is stronger than the other side’s.

STEP 7: START WRITING

Now that you have the key ingredients for your essay, you are ready to start writing. On the next page, you’ll find a checklist that will guide your writing and help you edit your work.

Persuasive Essay Checklist

Directions: Use this guide to write and check your own persuasive essay. Or exchange papers with a classmate and use the list to check each other's essays. Circle any sentence in which you find a mistake or the ideas are unclear.

Introduction

- ✓ Does the first paragraph provide a good idea of what the essay is about?
- ✓ Does the first paragraph include a topic sentence that strongly and clearly states the writer's opinion? Does the topic sentence tell the reader which side the essay will support?

Supporting Details

- ✓ Are there three points that support the topic sentence?
- ✓ Are there details to further explain the three supporting points?

The Other Side

- ✓ Does the writer give an argument for the other side—a point that argues against the topic sentence—and explain why that opinion is weak or flawed?

Conclusion

- ✓ Does the last paragraph remind the reader of the main points of the essay?
- ✓ Is the conclusion free of any new information (like another supporting point)?

General

- ✓ Does the whole essay read smoothly?
- ✓ Do the details relate to the topic sentence?
- ✓ Does everything make sense?
- ✓ Are the grammar, punctuation, and spelling correct?
- ✓ Is the essay convincing?
- ✓ Does the essay keep the reader interested?