Language for ...

pets

Age: Adult/teen
Level: Pre-intermediate–Intermediate
Length: 45–60 minutes
Language Focus: Key vocabulary associated with pets
Skills: Reading, speaking
Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student
Aims: To provide students with the language needed to discuss pets.

What are red words?

Ninety per cent of the time, speakers of English use just 7,500 words in speech and writing. These words appear in the Macmillan Dictionary in red and are graded with stars. One-star words are frequent, two-star words are more frequent and three-star words are the most frequent. 'Language for' lessons are based on red words and encourage students to improve their English through communicative tasks using collocation and commonly used phrases.

1 To introduce the topic, ask students to think of the words for different animals that people keep as pets. Set a time limit of two minutes and ask them to write down as many as they can. Ask them to compare their ideas with a partner. Then ask each pair to share their ideas with the whole class. Make a list on the board. Alternatively, you may like to make this into a game, by asking students to work in pairs or teams and awarding points for correct answers and spellings.

Teaching tip: Setting a short time limit when students brainstorm vocabulary can help both to motivate them to do the task and also introduce an element of competition, as many students will want to get more words than their classmates.

2 Give out the worksheet. Ask students to do the warmer, Exercise 1, individually, ordering the words. Ask students to discuss in pairs, giving reasons for their choices. Feedback on their ideas as a whole class, seeing what the similarities and differences are.

3 Ask students to work individually to complete Exercise 2a before looking at the text. Explain that these words will be in the text, but first they need to understand what they mean. Ask them to compare their answers in pairs, checking in a dictionary for any that are unknown. Go through their answers as a class to make sure they have all the correct answers.

4 Ask students to read through the eight questions in Exercise 2b carefully, before reading the text. Students then read the text and find the answers. Ask them to compare their answers in pairs, before briefly going through the answers as a whole class.

5 Ask students to work in pairs to complete Exercise 2c. Check answers with the whole class.

6 Ask students to work individually to prepare their answers in Exercise 3. Monitor and give help if necessary.

7 Ask students to work in pairs to complete Exercise 4. Remind them to use their ideas from Exercise 3. When they have finished, invite students to share some of their ideas with the whole class.

8 Ask students to work individually to think about their reactions to the statements in Exercise 5. Encourage them to write notes if necessary. Then ask them to work in pairs or small groups to discuss the three statements. Ask each pair or group to report back to the class. Make sure they give reasons and don't simply say 'We agree' or 'We disagree'.

pets

KEY:

1   students' own answers

2a. 1 litter
2 puppy; kitten
3 fluffy
4 cage
5 shelter
6 claws; fur
7 breed
8 hibernate

2b. 1 One is blue and one is brown.
2 He tries to keep them together.
3 In the evening.
4 Under the sofa.
5 Because they think they are unlucky and
they don't show up well in photographs.
6 It turns a reddish brown.
7 Digging and hiding.
8 Strawberries, raspberries and dandelion leaves.

2c. 1 d
2 c
3 a
4 e
5 b

1 spin around
2 break out
3 walk away
4 pick … up
5 slow down

3, 4 students' own answers

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Worksheet

1 Warmer

Put these pets in order from 1 (your favourite) to 7 (your least favourite). Think of reasons why you like or dislike them.

_____ cat

_____ dog

_____ rabbit

_____ bird (e.g. parrot)

_____ hamster

_____ tortoise

_____ fish

2 Text

a. **Complete the sentences with one of the words in the box.**

| kitten | breed | shelter | claws | puppy |
| hibernate | fluffy | litter | fur | cage |

1 A _____ is a group of baby cats, dogs or other animals that are born at the same time.

2 A _____ is a very young dog and a _____ is a young cat.

3 A _____ animal is covered with very soft hair.

4 Some pets, such as hamsters, rabbits and birds live in a _____.

5 A _____ is a temporary home for animals who have no owner.

6 Cats have quite sharp _____ and very soft _____.

7 A _____ is a group of animals that have particular characteristics that make them different from others of the same species.

8 Animals that _____ sleep through the winter months.

Language for ...

Worksheet

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b. **Read the text and answer the questions.**

1 What is unusual about Digby the dog's eyes?

_____

2 What does Digby try to do if one of the family walks away from the rest of the group?

_____

3 When does Stevie the hamster wake up?

_____

4 When Stevie got lost, where was he found?

_____

5 Why don't some people like black cats?

_____

6 What happens to the black cats' fur when they sit in the sun?

_____

7 What are tortoises good at?

_____

8 What does Freddie the tortoise love eating?

_____

c. **Match the verbs from the text (1–5) with the adverbial particles or prepositions (a-e) to make phrasal verbs from the text. Then use the phrasal verbs to complete the sentences.**

1 slow   a out
2 spin   b up
3 break   c around
4 walk   d down
5 pick   e away

1 Hamsters like to _____ in a wheel.
2 If hamsters _____ of their ball, they can easily get lost.
3 Some dogs don't like it when people _____ from the group.
4 Hamsters don't like it when people _____ them

_____ .
5 Animals usually begin to _____ when they get old.

Language for ...

onestopenglish

MACMILLAN DICTIONARY
www.macmillandictionary.com

pets

Worksheet

PETS

Digby

I have a pet dog called Digby – he's an Old English Sheepdog and has a grey and white shaggy coat. People often refer to him as 'the Dulux dog', because a dog of the same breed appears in famous advertising campaigns for Dulux paint in Australia, UK and South Africa.

We got Digby when he was a puppy. He has one blue eye and one brown and was the most active one in his litter. He is now three years old – which is around 29 in dog years – but he is still very active.

Traditionally, his breed worked on farms as sheepdogs. Because of this Digby still has a strong sheepdog instinct and he hates it when his whole family aren't together in the same place. He will always try to keep us together if one of us starts to walk away in the opposite direction from the others. He loves it when we are all together at home so he can relax in his favourite spot on his bed.
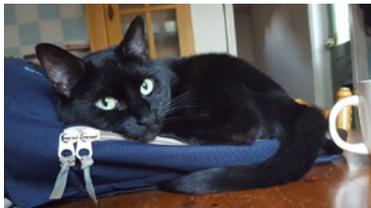
Stevie

Our family has a pet hamster called Stevie. We named him after Stevie Wonder (because Stevie Wonder is brilliant). He is a Syrian hamster and is light brown and extremely fluffy. He is two years old now, which is quite old for a hamster, so he is slowing down a bit. He sleeps in the day and wakes up in the evening. He likes to spin around in his wheel, gather food and make his bed cosy. He seems quite annoyed when we clean his cage out as he has to start making his bed all over again. Sometimes we put him in a big, see-through ball and he explores the house. Onc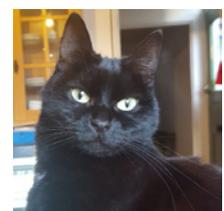e he broke out of his ball and we had a 'Stevie-hunt'. We were really worried as the back door was open and I was scared a bird would catch him. In the end, we found him under the sofa. He doesn't really like being picked up or held, but that's OK. It's just nice to watch him doing hamster-stuff. He is very cute.

Professor and Ace

My husband and I are the proud owners of two adorable cats, who are brother and sister. We adopted them from a shelter in August 2013 when they were four months old. They were originally called Jack and Jill, like the nursery rhyme, but I renamed them Professor and Ace after characters from one of my favourite TV shows – *Doctor Who*. Usually, kittens are adopted very quickly, but our cats are both black and lots of people don't want black cats. Apparently, some people think black cats are

unlucky, and others think they don't show up very well in photographs. Anyway, I'm very lucky, as our cats are both very friendly. When they sit in the sun, their fur turns reddish brown in the light, so I like to imagine they're secretly tigers. There aren't many downsides to having them around – but they do like to sharpen their claws on my sofa when I'm not looking. I definitely need to buy a new sofa now!

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Freddie

I have a pet tortoise called Freddie. You can tell he's male because he has a big tail. Freddie is a Herman's tortoise, which means he doesn't grow very big. I've had Freddie for seven years and he was one year old when I got him – he was tiny! He could fit into the palm of my hand. Everyone thinks tortoises are slow, but actually when it is warm they can go surprisingly fast. They are also good at digging and hiding. Once, he got lost and we didn't find him for six months! Freddie lives in a greenhouse in my mother's garden, because I only have a small flat. In the winter he hibernates in a box. Tortoises eat fruit, vegetables and plants and I particularly enjoy feeding him strawberries, raspberries and dandelion leaves. He loves those. Oh, and did you know that tortoises are deaf? They have no ears.

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3 Language in use

You are going to talk about pets with a partner. Think about these things:

- Have you got a pet? If so, what kind of pet is it?
- When and where did you get your pet?
- What are the good things about your pet?
- Do you have any problems with your pet?
- If you haven't got a pet at the moment, what kind of pet would you like to have and why?
- If you haven't got a pet and wouldn't like to have a pet, what are your reasons for not having one and not wanting one?

4 Communicate

Work with a partner. Ask and answer questions about your pets. Use your ideas from Exercise 3.

5 Discussion

Read these statements. Decide whether you agree or disagree with them. Think of reasons for your answers.

Then discuss your answers with a partner or in a small group.

1. 'Zoos are bad places for animals.'
2. 'Dogs are more intelligent than cats.'
3. 'It is good for children to have a pet.'