

A chiweenie with an overbite and 1.9m followers: how Tuna and Instagram's other top dogs rake in thousands per post

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- What do you think makes certain animals popular pets?
- What animal(s) would you like to have as a pet and why?

2 Key words

a. Find the words from the wordpool in the article. Then use the words to complete the definitions.

animal shelter
close-up

costume
cute

dog breeds
expert

fluffy
followers

promote
wrinkled

1. very soft and light, like fur or feathers _____
2. a place that takes care of animals that don't have a home _____
3. to advertise something to make people interested in it _____
4. different types of dogs such as labradors or chihuahuas _____
5. having small lines on the skin, often because of old age _____
6. a person who knows a lot about something _____
7. people who follow a person or page on social media _____
8. nice to look at; sweet and lovely _____
9. (of a photo or video) very near and with lots of detail _____
10. special clothes that make someone look like a different person or character

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.

1. Our new puppy is so _____ that everyone wants to hold it.
2. James has over two million _____ on social media.
3. My sister is an animal lover and works at the local _____ at weekends.
4. Fashion companies often use social media to _____ new products.
5. Our rabbit is so _____ that I have to brush its fur every week.
6. When I spend a long time in the bath, my skin becomes very _____.
7. The speaker was a(n) _____ on climate change.
8. Zac likes photography and took some amazing _____ photos of insects.
9. Pugs and samoyeds are two different _____.
10. Are you going to buy several _____ for the carnival party?

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Ellie Violet Bramley

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- 1 Tuna is a small dog called a chiweenie. This means he is a mix of a dachshund and a chihuahua. His tongue sticks out when he sleeps, and his neck looks a bit wrinkled. Tuna may look a little funny, but people love him. He has 1.9 million followers on Instagram! Many fans like to watch him dress up or see close-up pictures of his face.
- 2 Tuna became famous in 2012. Since then, he has received many kind comments. One person said, "He looks like someone's grandpa sleeping on the sofa after eating too much."
- 3 Joshua Paul Dale is a writer who studies why people like cute things. He says Tuna is an example of something called 'gap kawaii'. 'Kawaii' means cute in Japanese. 'Gap kawaii' is when something is cute and also a bit strange. People love Tuna because he looks different.
- 4 Tuna is not the only well-known dog. There is Loki the wolfdog, who loves the outdoors. Jiff the pomeranian can walk on two legs and has world records. Doug the pug is loved by celebrities. Maya the samoyed can move her ears to music.

- 5 Why do people follow these dogs? Jen Golbeck, a social media expert, says these dogs are special. They look different, but they are also very cute in surprising ways.
- 6 Seeing cute dogs online can make people feel happy and relaxed. Jiff is a very fluffy dog. He wears fun costumes like a unicorn or just soft clothes. Maya looks like she is always smiling, which makes people feel good.
- 7 Loki is different. He shows a wild and free life. Some people like his photos because they want to escape the stress of modern life.
- 8 There are also some problems. Some people worry about dressing up animals. Many of the dogs come from animal shelters, but some are from dog breeds with health issues.
- 9 Even so, people find them hard to resist. These dogs can also make money because they promote products online. In hard times, cute dog videos help people cheer up and feel better.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Decide if the statements are True or False according to the information in the article. Correct the false statements.

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Tuna is a mix of two different dog breeds: a dachshund and a chihuahua. | True / False |
| 2. Tuna has more than two million followers on Instagram. | True / False |
| 3. 'Gap kawaii' means something is cute because it is perfect. | True / False |
| 4. Jiff the pomeranian holds world records for his abilities. | True / False |
| 5. According to experts, cute dogs can make people feel less anxious. | True / False |
| 6. Maya the samoyed is known for being able to move her legs in time with music. | True / False |

4 Key language

a. Match the expressions from the article to their definitions.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1. stick out | a. known by many people; famous |
| 2. dress up | b. has a similar appearance to |
| 3. well-known | c. make someone feel happy when they are feeling sad |
| 4. looks like | d. put clothes on a child, toy or animal |
| 5. cheer up | e. push outwards and be easier to see than normal |

b. Choose the correct expression from the previous activity to complete the sentences.

- I bought Isla some chocolate, so she would _____ after a bad day.
- Children often _____ as superheroes for their school party.
- I think Maya really _____ her mother.
- The Eiffel Tower is a(n) _____ building in Paris.
- In my brother's school photo, his ears really _____!

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- Which dog from the article do you think is the most interesting and why?
- Would you follow an animal's social media account? Why or why not?

6 In your own words

a. Research online to find an influencer pet that you find cute. Prepare a short presentation about this pet and why you find it cute.

Useful language:

This is a cat / dog ...

Its ears are very long / floppy / unusual ...

It's cute because ...

It's got many followers who love it for ...

b. Present the influencer pet to your classmates and explain your reasons for choosing it.