

# Internet Interpet

Nothing beats the stroke of fur on the hand, fingers gliding across feathers or the scratching of scales on a live pet. But for those who can't have pets due to allergies, landlord restrictions, lack of backyard or a lifestyle impediment, there's always the online or cyber version to consider.

You can join over 70 million virtual pet owners on the Internet at Neopets ([www.neopets.com](http://www.neopets.com)) which is amazingly the fourth most popular website in the world behind Google, eBay and Yahoo!. You can create your own pets (up to a maximum of 4), feed them, groom them, look after them, and watch them grow. You can also chat to other people, play games, create your own Web pages, send NeoMail, and lots more.

The first thing you need to do is sign up with Neopets and click to create your account. Once you have created an account, you can create your own pets. Click on Create a Pet and decide which species, gender, and even personality you want to look after. Alternatively, you can adopt one of their abandoned Neopets from the Neopian Pound. You can then go to online stores to feed them, buy treats and engage in all types of bizarre behaviour. It's great for kids and those of us adults who still have the kid in them, loving to play.

At Virtual dog ([www.virtualdog.com](http://www.virtualdog.com)) it's a bit of a game to get through and a lot of fun to pick a pet and enter the realm. You can check on it from home or work, having adopted a pet from the virtual pound.

At GoPets Global Community Pet game ([www.gopetslive.com](http://www.gopetslive.com)) you can interact with virtual pet owners from around the world. Each GoPet is a unique 3D companion that makes its home on its owner's desktop. GoPets are not restricted to a single computer, however -- when they feel like wandering, they leave home and visit the desktops



of other GoPets users. In their travels, GoPets visit their owners' friends and families, as well as introducing their owners to other GoPets members who share similar interests. These travelling GoPets are messengers and ambassadors -- they form the dynamic network of connections that comprises the GoPets social network. There are already close to 20,000 pets and nearly double that amount of users.

But if you want to determine the appropriate dog, for example, to have as a real pet, there are a variety of Pet Selector sites that try to match your lifestyle, age, home info and other details to a breed. The key Australian one is Selectapet ([www.petnet.com.au/selectapet/dogselectapet.html](http://www.petnet.com.au/selectapet/dogselectapet.html)) which asks about 15 questions and then delivers a selection of breeds that may (or may not) be suitable. It's an indicator only and in the end, I'd pick a rescue dog over a designer dog any day! And yes, they have the same setup for a cat chooser at [www.petnet.com.au/selectapet/catselectapet.html](http://www.petnet.com.au/selectapet/catselectapet.html).

A somewhat cute overseas site has pets and other animals sectors including dogs, cats and even horses. It's at <http://selectsmart.com/pets.html>. And if you want to see how the UK does it, the British site of PetPlanet has a dog selector at [www.petplanet.co.uk/select\\_a\\_breed.asp](http://www.petplanet.co.uk/select_a_breed.asp).

But if you're into watching video online, the most hilarious site I've found is the Pet Stars programs online from the Animal Planet at <http://animal.discovery.com>. My favourite is Einstein the African Grey Parrot who talks up a storm and does amazing tricks. Whether it's the skateboard and bicycle riding macaw Zachary, Skidboot the performing dog, Twiggy the waterskiing ferret, or Groucho, the singing amazon parrot that sings "Yankee Doodle Dandy", "How Much is That Doggy In The Window" and even "Alouette" in French, the variety of Pet Stars talents are rollicking and amazing. There are three seasons worth of winners of this hilarious TV competition with celebrity judges.

For those who don't have the patience to teach an old dog new tricks, try the new robotic pet such as the Aibo from Sony which responds to commands and has an artificial intelligence that is astounding. If you type in 'Robot Pets' in Google or any other search engine, you'll find a wealth of sites and news including the latest developments in computerised pets helping remind the elderly to take their medication and also serving as virtual companions. There's even an article on how some people are developing an affection for their robotic vacuum cleaners much like pets and are dressing them up!

But if you're after something less daunting than a robot, the perfect pet may be one of the Perfect Petzzz at [www.perfectpetzzz.com](http://www.perfectpetzzz.com) and just introduced here in Australia. They're lifelike breathing puppies and kittens that even snore! On one side, it can teach kids responsible pet ownership and on the other side, it can serve as a virtual pet for those, like the elderly, who can't have a real one. And yes, they do have accessories and can run for about four months on two D size batteries--just don't bathe them!

## Quiet, please...



I'm in the middle of a dream right now and it has YOU in it. It's the kind of dream that makes you smile, even when you're sleeping. And if you listen closely you can hear my soft, gentle snores...

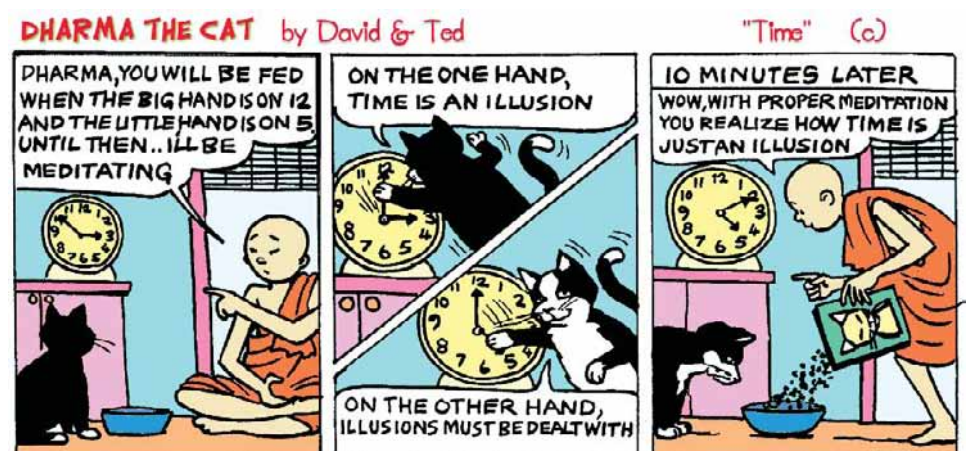
In my dream, you find me, adopt me, and take me home with you.

- puppies & kittens
- adoption certificate provided
- comes with Petzzz bed
- comes with pet carrier box
- helps to teach children pet care
- wonderful companions at home or in nursing homes
- no feeding, walking or bad behaviour
- they breathe for 2 months on 2 x 'D' batteries (not included)
- hand covered in synthetic fur

I actually breathe!



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