



# Lifecycles: growing up

This lesson focuses on growth using babies (human and animal babies) and their different lifespans as examples. Children will make and communicate observations and comparison of humans and other animals. They'll also be able to match young and adults of the same animals and know that all animals should be treated with compassion.

**KEY STAGE: 1****Supporting materials:**

Presentation – visual prompts (see downloads)

**Equipment:**

Baby animal soft toy

## 1 Starter activity

### Matching up

- Stick different adult and baby images on a board, flipchart or use an interactive whiteboard.
- Interactive whiteboard.
- Point out that some baby animals have special names: can the pupils read or guess the name of each baby animal?
- Which baby animals look like their parents? Which baby animals look different from their parents?

## 2 Main activity

### Baby animal care

- Ask the pupils to look again at the different images of adults and babies, e.g. cat and kitten (see image collections [Pets](#) and [Baby animals: pets](#)). Focus on one particular baby animal.

How do the pupils think a baby animal should be looked after?

1. Will they need the same things as a human baby?
  2. Who looks after baby animals? In the case of pets, it is the pet owner who needs to make sure the baby animal is looked after properly as well as the parent animal.
- Work in groups. Give each group a different baby animal picture. Ask them to discuss the needs of this animal and then answer the questions above. Ask each group to feed back their ideas. Use kitten care as a starting point.

Kittens:

1. need to be looked after very carefully
2. shouldn't be left alone for long
3. need special food four or five times a day
4. need a clean litter tray
5. need lots of time and attention
6. need to be treated gently.

## Plenary activity

### How long?

- Explain to the class that many pets live longer than people think. Baby animals look cute but they need a lot of attention and special care. Like all babies, they grow up. Encourage pupils to appreciate that before taking on a pet, people need to think whether they can care for that animal for the rest of their life – however long that is.

- Using a timeline, compare the pupils' ages with the average lifespan of an animal.

Ask them the following questions:

1. Can they imagine looking after an animal for the whole of the animal's life?
2. How old will they be when the animal is old?
3. What do they think they will be doing then?

## Lifespans

- **Cat:** 12–14 years (on average) but they can live for up to 20 years.
- **Dog:** Depends on the size of the dog but is around 12–14 years.
- **Gerbil:** Up to three years.
- **Goldfish:** Up to 25 years.
- **Rabbit:** Up to 10 years.
- **Budgie:** Up to 10 years.
- **Hamster:** Up to two years.
- **Guinea pig:** Up to seven years.

## + What next?

### Extension activities

#### Timeline

Pupils could recreate the timeline on a computer using data to create different pictographs of the lifespans of different pets.

### Want to explore the topic of caring for pets further? Try these lessons:

- [Exotic animals as pets](#)  
Explore the complex needs of exotic (non-domestic) pets and the responsibility involved in looking after them.
- [A nation of animal lovers](#)  
This lesson introduces the concept of animal cruelty and whether it is deliberate or based on neglect.
- [Looking after pets takes time](#)  
Discuss the responsibilities of pet care, the amount of time and the activities required to look after pets properly.
- [We all have basic needs](#)  
Explore the similarities and differences between human needs and pets' needs.
- [How do we care for animals?](#)  
Building on the lesson '[We all have basic needs](#)', explore the needs of pets further, and our responsibilities as owners.