



# The big debate

## Should we stop having classroom pets?

Some people want animals at school, but others think they're better kept at home.

### What you need to know

- Many classrooms include small pets that are cared for by students, who give them food and water and clean their habitat.
- The most popular class pets are fish, followed by guinea pigs and hamsters. Other classrooms have rabbits, hedgehogs, bearded dragons, or tarantulas.
- Studies show that pets in the classroom can help improve students' social, behavioral, and academic development.



**PET PAIRS**  
In Switzerland and Sweden, it is illegal to own only one guinea pig because the animal would get lonely.

Whether they're furry, scaly, or slinky, pets can be an exciting addition to a classroom. Often, students get to have fun naming the animals before taking on the responsibility of caring for them. Depending on the type of animal, kids sometimes even get to hold the pets—with a teacher's supervision, of course. While class pets can be cute and cuddly, many people are concerned that they're also a distraction for students and an added responsibility for teachers. And organizations like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals have raised concerns about the well-being of animals in schools. What do you think? Should we stop having classroom pets?

### Yes—school is for learning

Classroom pets are adorable, but that's exactly the problem. Students will want to play with them all day, rather than paying attention to reading, math, or science. Taking care of class pets requires time and effort, which isn't fair to teachers. Even if kids help, the teacher is ultimately responsible for the animals and making sure someone takes them home during school breaks. Noisy classrooms can also be scary and stressful for pets, which can cause health problems. Students and teachers might not know the best way to care for them, and if the animals need to see a vet, who will pay the bill for that? Overall, it's not a great idea.

### No—they're a beneficial bonus

Caring for animals in class teaches students to take care of another living thing and helps them learn responsibility and compassion. Many students don't have pets at home, so this is their only chance to have that experience. Students can also develop strong emotional bonds with class pets, which can positively affect their behavior and motivation in school. And kids who are feeling frustrated or upset can spend time with the animal, which will help them calm down and feel better. Class pets are also great for learning. There are endless ways to incorporate them into math problems, creative writing, or science lessons.

**YES**

### Three reasons we should stop having classroom pets

- 1 They're so cute and entertaining that they can be a major distraction for students.
- 2 Teachers unfairly wind up doing most of the work to care for a classroom pet, like making sure it has a home over breaks.
- 3 Classrooms are loud and hectic, which isn't a great environment for animals and can pose health risks to them.

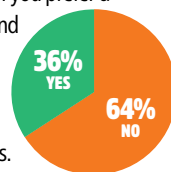
**NO**

### Three reasons we should not stop having classroom pets

- 1 They help students learn to be responsible, develop compassion, and understand other living things.
- 2 Class pets can be comforting for students and create a more relaxed and enjoyable learning environment.
- 3 Incorporating class pets into lessons can make learning fun and interesting.

### LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if driverless taxis are a good idea. Most of you prefer a person behind the wheel: 64% of you said no, and 36% said yes.



### What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit [kids.theweekjunior.com/polls](https://kids.theweekjunior.com/polls) so you can vote in our debate. Vote **YES** if you think we should stop having classroom pets or **NO** if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

**The goal of the big debate** is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.