

Ideas for Pocket Pets Learning Activities

Advanced Level

Need more ideas for your pocket pet project? There are hundreds of things you can do! You are being asked to complete **at least five** activities each year. Use this list, the *Pocket Pets Resource Handbook*, and your imagination, and then write your ideas in your *Pocket Pets Project and Record Book*. Have fun!

For all pocket pets

- Learn the scientific classification for your pocket pet.
- Draw the dental structure of a rodent.
- Describe the kinds of food omnivorous rodents eat, and compare and contrast omnivorous with granivorous and herbivorous.
- Define cellulose and describe its purpose in rodent nutrition.
- Create a blog about your pocket pet 4-H project and update it throughout your project year.
- Join a pocket pet organization (some are listed on page 67 of your *Pocket Pets Resource Handbook*).
- Subscribe to a pocket pet organization's newsletter/magazine, either online or by US mail.
- Visit the Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine.
- Watch a video on responsible pet ownership and report what you learned to your 4-H club members.
- Read a book about pocket pets from your local library. Compare and contrast information in the book with information in your handbook.
- Visit a pet shop and a breeder to learn about their pocket pets. Compare and contrast what you learn including health, care, tameness, and prices of the animals.
- Join an online discussion group to discuss your pet with other pocket pet fanciers.
- Learn where sanctioned pocket pet shows are throughout the United States. Contact one of them to see how you could start one in your community.
- Use the Internet to investigate a pocket pet organization to learn all you can about it.
- Develop a small business plan to see how you could raise pocket pets for profit.



- Teach a clinic on selection, nutrition, care and management, handling, and showing pocket pets.
- Investigate three types of carrying cages used to travel with your pocket pet. Compare and contrast the three types and conclude which one(s) are the safest and best to use.
- Using the Internet, compare and contrast the many types of bedding used for pocket pets, listing the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- Talk with one or more breeders about the kind(s) of bedding they use for their pocket pets, and share your findings with your project helper.
- Visit a pet supply store to see what types of food and water containers they sell for pocket pets. Read the labels on each item and determine which would work best for your animal and cage.
- Visit a pet supply store and research on the Internet various kinds of pocket pet cage accessories. Select five kinds and list the advantages and disadvantages of each type for your pocket pet.
- Read your pet's food label. Make a list of all of the ingredients that are included in the diet. Select five ingredients and research the nutritive value of each.
- Research antibiotic sensitivity of rodents and make a list of antibiotics and their effects on rodents.
- Select five general diseases/health problems listed on pages 18-20 of your handbook and learn more about them. Research these conditions in relation to your pocket pet.
- Learn how to trim the teeth of a pocket pet with malocclusion.
- Teach a new 4-H pocket pet project member how to show a pet.
- Select one pocket pet breed organization and learn the show standards for that species.
- Compare the gestation period and growth milestones (fur starting to appear, eyes opening, etc.) of the four pocket pets of your handbook. Record these comparisons on a chart.
- Compare and contrast recommended housing for each of the four types of pocket pets.
- Compare and contrast the recommended methods of introduction for breeding and for breeding each of the four types of pocket pets.
- Make a maze for your pocket pet. Train your pocket pet to execute the maze. Record your pet's progress.

Gerbils

- Using the American Gerbil Society's color strips at www.agsgerbils.org/Learn/Color_Strips, learn the genetics and color(s) of your gerbil(s).
- Review the Mongolian Gerbil Profile on page 28 of your *Pocket Pets Resource Handbook*. Learn 15 profile characteristics and tell your project helper about these.
- Define monogamous and explain what it means in reference to breeding gerbils.
- Describe how to introduce gerbils when breeding them.
- Research three or more colors and varieties of gerbils. Record your findings, including pictures, and share with your project helper.
- Learn the show standards for gerbils. Then, evaluate your gerbil(s) using them, and document your evaluation.
- Visit a breeder and study a show-quality gerbil. Describe its color and explain how it compares to the show standards.
- Visit a breeder of gerbils. Ask permission to take pictures of at least six different colors. Categorize them per show classes. Record your pictures and findings.

Hamsters

- Describe how to introduce hamsters when breeding them.
- Review the Syrian Hamster Profile on page 36. Learn 15 profile characteristics and tell your project helper about these.
- Compare the behavior of a Syrian hamster to that of each of the dwarf species of hamsters. Discuss your findings.
- Make a chart that compares and contrasts the characteristics and behaviors of each species of hamster identified of your *Pocket Pets Resource Handbook*.
- Learn the show standards for hamsters. Then, evaluate your hamster(s) using them, and document your evaluation.
- Purchase a show-quality hamster from a breeder. Describe its color and explain how it compares to hamster show standards found at www.chahamsters.org/standsum.html.
- Visit a breeder of hamsters. Ask permission to take pictures of at least three different species and six different colors. Categorize them per show classes. Record your pictures and findings.

Mice

- Review the Fancy Mouse Profile on page 46 of your *Pocket Pets Resource Handbook*. Learn 15 profile characteristics and tell your project helper about them.
- Describe how to introduce mice when breeding them.
- In addition to learning the seven varieties of mice according to the American Fancy Rat and Mouse Association (AFRMA) standards, learn the five sections of groupings within each variety. Record what you have learned.
- Learn the AFRMA Official Mouse standards. Then, evaluate your mouse (mice) using them, and document your evaluation.
- Purchase one or more show-quality mice from a breeder. Describe each of their varieties and colors, and explain how it compares to the AFRMA Official Mouse standards.
- Visit a breeder of mice. Ask permission to take pictures of at least three different varieties and colors. Categorize them per show classes. Record your pictures and findings.
- Train your mouse to complete a maze. Document your training strategies, successes, and need for improvement.

Rats

- Review the Domestic Rat Profile on page 55 of your *Pocket Pets Resource Handbook*. Learn 15 profile characteristics and tell your project helper about them.
- Describe how to introduce rats when breeding them.
- In addition to learning the six varieties of rats according to the American Fancy Rat and Mouse Association standards, learn the six sections of groupings within each variety. Record what you have learned.
- Learn the AFRMA Official Rat standards. Then, evaluate your rat(s) using them, and document your evaluation.
- Explain what a judge is looking for in show rats by describing the eight points included in the AFRMA Official Rat standards of the ideal rat.
- Purchase one or more show-quality rats from a breeder. Describe each of their varieties, colors and markings, and explain how it compares to the AFRMA Official Rat standards.
- Visit a breeder of rats. Ask permission to take pictures of at least three different varieties and colors. Categorize them per show classes. Record your pictures and findings.
- Train your rat to complete a maze. Document your training strategies, successes, and need for improvement.