

PET ANTICS – THE MOMENTS THAT MEAN THE MOST

By Kent DuFault



Photograph by Kent DuFault

This is Lolita. She is my oldest cat and is now approaching twelve years old.

When she was a kitten, we lived in a very tiny apartment. Her world was small.

Over the years, I have learned that Lolita is a pet that craves a lot of attention.

When I first got her, Lolita would do the craziest thing when guests were over.

She would fly through the living room while doing a strange dance on her back feet. It was so odd that anyone that ever saw her do this would comment on it.

Once I left that apartment, she never did it again.

Sadly, I don't have any photos of it (because I wasn't prepared). However, the memory of her dancing across that room burns in my mind, and even today still makes me laugh out loud.



Photograph by Kent DuFault

This is a more recent photo of my bearded dragon, Whiskers, and my youngest cat, Ramona. These two have become inseparable friends. So much so that I will find them together on most days, relaxing and touching each other.

Supposedly bearded dragons are deathly afraid of cats, but mine isn't.

This touching (that's not supposed to happen) and Lolita's crazy dance across the room are examples of 'pet antics.'

A pet antic is that special something a pet does repeatedly that makes them unique to you as their family (owner).

This Creativity Prompt on pet antics is a broad umbrella of almost everything we've discussed so far in the previous four Prompts.

In this fifth Prompt, I'm going to offer up some suggestions about pet activity and quirks. I want you to then make a list of the antics that your pets do that you want to capture. I also want you to make a set of written plans for each antic and how you're going to capture it.



Photograph by Daria Shevtsova

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-playing-with-her-adult-dalmatian-1390075/>

Most pets have a go-to expression when they are being embraced, held, or restrained. There is nothing better than having a fantastic portrait of your dog yawning every time he gets hugged (or whatever your pet does!).



Assignment:

Photograph your pet's expressions when interacting with family members. Capture the unusual expression.



Photograph by Kent DuFault

All pets have that place they want to go to when they aren't necessarily supposed to be there. The result is often an antic of body language and facial expression that is priceless.

**Assignment:**

Photograph your pets in a place they aren't supposed to be, but you often catch them there.



Photograph by Karolina Grabowska

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/gray-short-coat-large-dog-on-green-grass-field-4749999/>

A pet will light up when you invite them to participate in an activity that they love.

Don't forget your basics. Keep a clean and meaningful background whenever possible. Did you notice that the photographer put their camera at eye level with the dog?



Assignment:

Photograph your pets in what would be considered either playtime or work. Make it an activity that they love to do. Watch your backgrounds and keep them clean and relevant.



Photograph by Pixabay

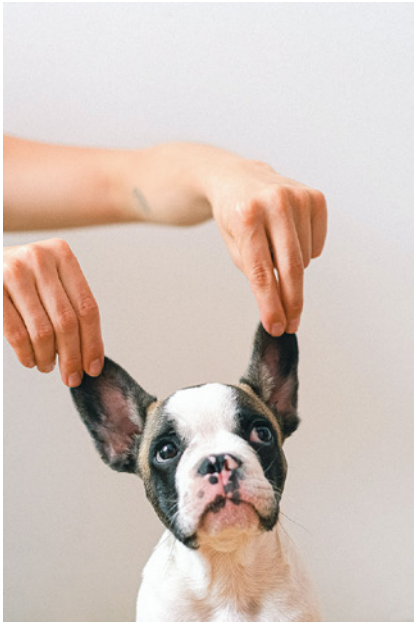
<https://www.pexels.com/photo/dog-pet-cute-37401/>

Nothing creates better antics than a pet attempting to get somewhere they're not allowed.



Assignment:

This assignment is relatively open-ended. You need to know your pet and what they might attempt to do. For example, my Siamese cat loves to open any cabinet doors at her level on the ground. She often gets stuck inside. My bearded dragon is only allowed in some areas of the house. However, I'll catch him looking at me from across the room. His body language tells me that he is about to bolt into another room that he's not supposed to be in. Seeing him do this is incredibly funny. It's a great pet antic that I have yet to capture. Did you know bearded dragons are fast? I mean lightning fast!



Photograph (l) by Anna Shvets and Photograph (m) by Simona Kidric and Photograph (r) by Flickr

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/black-and-white-french-bulldog-4587998/>

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/medium-short-coated-white-dog-on-white-textile-2607544/>

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/grey-and-white-long-coated-cat-in-middle-of-book-shelf-156321/>

I'm not a fan of setting up antic pictures for the sake of cuteness. But that's just me. I never photograph in this manner. However, many people love this form of pet photography. (Just look at Instagram or Tik Tok.)



Photograph (l) by La Miko and Photograph (r) by bin Ziegler

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/woman-in-brown-and-white-plaid-scarf-sitting-on-beach-3671283/>

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/black-dog-beside-little-girl-1364756/>

The one exception I make for the 'staged' pet antics photo is when the concept incorporates human interaction. A tiny smudge of well-placed peanut butter creates a beautiful kiss picture, or a blanket wrapping up a dog with her owner not only keeps them warm but also establishes a closeness that would be missing without it. In the previous example photos, the owner tugging on the ears was my favorite human interaction.



Assignment:

Create at least five pet antic shots that you conceive and set up. Keep it real and meaningful. Use these examples as your inspiration.



Photograph (l) Laura Stanley and Photograph (r) by Pixabay

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/dog-lying-on-shore-during-day-2252311/>

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/adorable-animal-cat-cute-271611/>

A great way to enhance your pet antics photos is to include composition elements.

Do you have a dog that loves to dig at the beach? Use it as a leading line.

Does your cat love their cat tree? Use it as a frame.

Each step makes your pet pictures a little bit more special.



Assignment:

Create a portfolio of at least 10 pet antics pictures where you use some element of the scene as a composition tool. Here we discussed leading lines and frames; however, numerous others would work as well.



Photograph by Kent DuFault

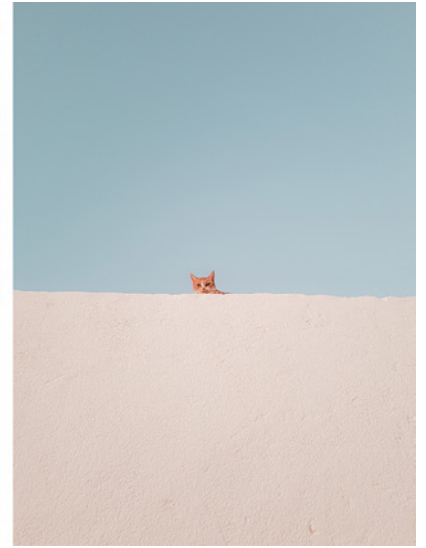
One of my favorite pet antics techniques is to use juxtaposition. Are you familiar with the term?

Here is the definition of juxtaposition from the Merriam-Webster dictionary: *the act or an instance of placing two or more things side by side often to compare or contrast or create an exciting effect. An unusual juxtaposition of colors or shapes placed next to each other.*

In this example photo, my cat is juxtaposed against the dragon tail for a comic effect.

**Assignment:**

Create at least 10 photos where you juxtapose your pet(s) against another pet or object. Push for the unusual.



Photograph (l) by Ray Bilcliff and Photograph (r) by Amine Mayoufi

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/dog-running-on-seashore-under-blue-sky-and-white-clouds-1509237/>

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/peeking-little-cat-3069334/>

The last technique I want to share with you today is what I call the 'peek-a-boo' shot.

When a pet believes that they are unobserved, they will often get into some antics. This technique involves letting the pet have some room to start acting out. I typically include a lot of background in these shots. However, your composition needs to be spot-on so that the pet still stands out as the photo's subject.

I love this technique, and some of my best pet shots came from this.



Photograph by Kent DuFault

I captured my neighbor's pet cat using the peek-a-boo method.



Assignment:

Try the peek-a-boo method and see if you like it!