

SMOOTH MOVERS

The latest robo-pooches come in two flavours, Latte and Macaron – that's ivory and grey to you. Whereas the original Aibos were all angular, cold steel lines, the new look pooch's smooth soft curves are much more appealing to the touch, even if they do seem a little cutesy and Hello Kitty-esque. Watching them move is incredible: walking is slick and accomplished, head movements unerringly life-like and seeing them sit up and beg could melt even the iciest of hearts.

**A PUP THAT NEEDS PETTING**

As with the original Aibo, the IR sensors in the LM Series respond to bright pink colours. If you're wondering why, it's because environments are less likely to be saturated with it and thus confuse the poor pups. Throw them a pink ball and it's like throwing a kitten a ball of string. Touch sensors on the head, under the paws and in the tail allow the pooches to interact with their environment to the extent that you can affect their moods and their development to maturity by the manner and frequency of your affection. The little nub on the top of their heads will flash different colours to indicate how happy they are. As a rule, a much-stroked Aibo is a happy Aibo.

**BELLY BRAINS**

The Aibo's 'brains' are located in its belly and are based around a Sony Memory Stick. It seems like a canine Einstein compared to real dogs. Two types of software, or 'personalities' are available: you can either buy an infant (Aibo Life) that requires nurturing to adulthood, or a fully mature adult (Aibo Pal). Using a camera in its mouth, it's capable of taking JPEG photos on demand. It has a 75-word vocabulary, can learn its own name, the name of its owner, and will hum along with you or mimic what you say to it. You can compose melodies, affecting Aibo's pitch with hand motions and, if you have Aibo Pal software, while it recharges on its energy station it will act as a watchdog, detecting movement and taking photos of what it sees.

