



Young readers are sometimes hesitant about their reading abilities. Did you know that children often feel at ease reading to animals? Pets are just there to listen—not to judge how well they are reading.

There are numerous benefits to reading to an animal:

- ✓ In a 2013 study that looked at the impact of therapy animals on youth literacy rates, students who worked with the dogs demonstrated levels of improvements with **net gains of more than a year's growth in reading rate, accuracy, fluency and comprehension** (Treat, 2013).
- ✓ When looking at the impact of reading to an animal in a population of homeschooled students, it was found that **reading to a dog significantly impacted student reading rates** (Smith, 2010).
- ✓ Kindergarten children who were a part of a dog reading group achieved **higher end-of-year reading scores** as compared to a control group that did not include a therapy dog (Kirnan, Siminerio, & Wong, 2016).
- ✓ A pilot study found that children were **better able to stay on-task** in their reading program when a therapy dog was involved (Bassette & Taber-Doughty, 2013).
- ✓ A literature review found that **reading to a dog may positively impact children's behavior**, thus contributing to the creation of a learning environment that fosters enhanced reading performance (Hall, Gee, & Mills, 2016).
- ✓ Reading aloud to a therapy dog team tended to **increase children's scores on a test of oral reading fluency** much more than reading aloud to peers (Levinson et al., 2017).

Tips on how to successfully read to your pet:

- Set up a comfortable spot for the reader and pet to sit. Make sure the reader will be able to show the pet pictures from the book.
- Pets can get distracted, so have a favorite pet toy on hand to keep the pet engaged if needed.
- Encourage your child to pause and pet your animal to keep them settled down and comfortable during the reading session.
- Reward the pet for their good listening behavior with a treat at the end of the reading session!