



Reminders & Tips for READING PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

Due to the increasing popularity of Reading Programs with Pet Partners teams, this first edition will focus on Pet Partners visiting schools, libraries and book stores.

To ensure all visits are safe and successful – we are providing this cheat sheet of Reminders and Tips as a useful reference tool. It also helps to share these Reminders and Tips with any new facility or setting prior to visiting.

REMINDERS:

- All Pet Partners teams must abide by Pet Partners Policies and Procedures, regardless of what type of setting they are visiting, in order to be covered under Delta Society's primary commercial general liability insurance.
- **YAYABA – You Are Your Animal's Best Advocate.** Each Pet Partners team must be proactive and an advocate for their animal. Give their animal a break, stop an interaction or visit if needed.
- As Pets Partners, please practice **PETS** at all times.

P	E	T	S
proximity/presence — being close to your animal, always staying right next to your animal;	making good eye contact and 'checking in' with your animal;	maintaining touch, or contact with your animal, hold onto the leash of your animal at all times;	speech tone — talking to your animal, having a supportive and reassuring speech tone with your animal.

- Each facility or setting must have AAA/AAT policies and procedures in place.
- Each facility or setting must provide Pet Partners teams with an orientation to their facility, including the facility's policies and procedures.
- Each facility or setting must have a contact person for Pet Partners teams to document their visits. This includes signing in and out as stated in the Pet Partners policies and procedures.
- Each facility or setting must have a contact person who identifies which clients or students can receive a Pet Partners visit and how visits are to be conducted.
- Each Pet Partners handler must assess the facility or setting without their animal prior to their first visit.
- Always be aware of calming or stress signals in your animal, and act accordingly. Never assume that a child will know how to properly interact with your animal. If you need to redirect a child's inappropriate behavior (e.g., beginning to climb on your animal,

reaching to pull his/her tail or ears) to more appropriate interactions, please do so kindly but firmly and without hesitation. Protect your animal's sensitive areas, and safely reposition your animal as needed. Encourage and praise correct handling and petting.

- Each Pet Partners team must be familiar with the Pet Partners policies and procedures and understand how they apply to every facility or setting they visit.
- Each Pet Partners team is encouraged to further review the Pet Partners manual in working with specific facilities and settings and the client population they serve.

TIPS:

- Connect with other Pet Partners teams that are involved in successful reading programs and share visiting techniques.
- Learn about the population that you and your animal will be visiting – this will allow you to better understand age-appropriate books, and learning capabilities and stages of human development (from infancy to older adults), and to be sensitive to any cultural differences.
- Have a handler without an animal monitor the visiting sessions to assist with addressing issues, seeking staff if needed so that you can focus at your task at hand.
- If your animal falls asleep while the child is reading – let the child know that that your animal is dreaming about the story as it unfolds (no need to wake up your dozing teammate!).
- Best place to be in a room? A corner or against a wall! You and your animal can be safely backed up into the corner or wall with the child by your side. This allows for you to stay focused on your animal, the child and any other activities in front of you. And no surprises from behind!

What Would You Do?

You and your dog walk into a classroom to participate in a reading program for first graders.

The teacher tells you that two students are waiting eagerly in the far right corner of the room, along with their parents who want to observe.

You introduce yourself and your dog, position yourself and your dog on the blanket. You then encourage the students to pick out a book and sit down next to your dog to begin the reading session. The students are very excited and cannot sit still. They lean into your dog, wave the book in his face, and squeal uncontrollably. The parents smile and continue watching. And then while you are watching the students, your dog jumps up and growls – one of the students begins to cry....what would you do?

Tell us **what you would do** — How would you more proactively manage this scenario? How would you accomplish that? What would you do if the scenario played out as written?

Also send along your best practices for participating in reading activities. We will share helpful submissions with Pet Partners in our next e-newsletter and post on the Pet Partners membership section of our website. Please send your ideas and best practices to bestpractices@deltasociety.org.