

Tales to Tails FAQ's

- What is Tales to Tails?
 - Tales to Tails is the Roseville Public Library's read to a dog program, where children gain confidence by reading to friendly library dogs. As an R.E.A.D. (Reading Education Assistance Dogs) site (<http://www.therapyanimals.org/read>), the goal of the Tales to Tails program is to utilize the companionship of therapy animals to build and encourage children's love of books and the reading environment, and provide an opportunity for them to practice the full range of communications skills. Research indicates that positive experiences like this will help lay the foundation for a lifetime of learning, and a higher quality of life.
- How does it work?
 - Registered children come into the program, read aloud to a dog for 25 minutes, once a week for four weeks. This program helps build reading confidence in children; animals are ideal reading companions to help children relax and have fun while reading. This is a fun and popular activity; children often pet and snuggle next to the dog, which induces relaxation and lowers blood pressure and heart rate.
- How are the dogs screened?
 - All dog teams, comprised of the dog and human handler, are interviewed by library staff. Dog teams must be Delta Society Pet Partner® program certified, and are screened as to their interest in reading. Additionally, each handler is asked to become R.E.A.D. certified by Intermountain Therapy Animals, Inc.
- How do I register my child?
 - All children are added to a waitlist for this program. Approximately one week before the new session starts, library staff contacts the family to let them know that there is space available. Library staff does not leave voicemails or phone messages for this program, so it's important for each family to make sure that there is a "best contact" phone number when they are waitlisted. Additional questions are asked of each family before registration is final.
- What makes a child eligible for this program?
 - Children must be 6 – 11 years of age, able to read independently for 20 – 25 minutes, and not have any allergies to dogs.
- I was waitlisted for this program and didn't get in. Why?
 - It's possible that library staff tried to contact you, and was unable to reach you after 5 different phone calls made over a period of a few days at different times. (Library staff DOES NOT leave voicemails or phone messages for this high-demand program). If staff was unable to contact you, they may have moved to the next person on the waitlist.
 - To ensure that a number of children have the opportunity to read to the library dogs, there is a maximum level of participation for this program. After attending three 4-week sessions for this program, or the equivalent of 12 weeks in the program, repeat participants are given second priority after new potential participants.
- I was registered for this program, and have to miss a day because of illness, family emergency, etc. Who do I call?
 - Try calling the library's main number at (916) 774-5221. If no one answers, leave a message stating that you were unable to make it to the Tales to Tails program, and that you do not want to be dropped from the program.
 - If you do not call and miss a session without notifying library staff (a "no call/no show") then you will be dropped from the program.
- What are the benefits of Tales to Tails? How does this program help raise a child's self-esteem and confidence?
 - Children often dread public speaking, especially reading aloud. They may be nervous or self-conscious, worry about making mistakes and appearing foolish, and may have a

hard time focusing on the actual reading. When they read with a dog, they immediately relax, forget to feel self-conscious or nervous, and start enjoying themselves. More information is available on the benefits of similar programs viewable here: <http://www.therapyanimals.org/read/article86.html#3>

- Do the children get to choose their own animal?
 - Library staff assigns each child to a specific dog each week, and rotates them to a different animal the next week. In a four week session, most children will read to 4 different dogs
- What about allergies?
 - Child who are allergic to dogs are unable to participate, and will be screened out of the program. Although all of the animals are scrupulously clean and well-groomed before each session, children with severe allergies or asthma would probably not enjoy the session.
- How does the presence of the handler not interfere in the dog/child relationship, or inhibit the child reader?
 - When an animal is present in therapy or in a reading activity, people tend to forget about the other humans and their inhibitions disappear. Of course, the handler is also a supportive, positive, uncritical listener, oftentimes speaking on behalf of the dog to help the dog understand the story. They do occasionally help with reading comprehension or pronunciation when a child asks them for assistance.
- Have any of the children had negative reactions to the dogs?
 - No, we have not had any child have a negative reaction to a dog. Occasionally a child may have some slight hesitation when meeting a new dog breed or a particularly large dog. However, after being introduced and learning about this new breed from the handler, children seem to relax and settle into reading.
- Does the handler ever read to the child and dog?
 - No. Our Tales to Tails program is about building self-confidence and encouragement for existing readers; the handler does not read to the child.
- Who chooses the reading material?
 - The Roseville Public Library owns a number of books about animals, ranging from pre-readers (like *Biscuit* or *Henry & Mudge*) to chapter books (like the Animal Ark series), that are available during the session. If a child wants to bring their own reading material or homework reading assignments, though, we allow them to do so.