



Fun Reading  Reading for Life

Our mission is to make reading fun for children,  
so they become confident, lifelong readers.  
No child should be left behind in literacy.

“Education is not the filling of a bucket  
but the lighting of a fire”

William Butler Yeats

## Volunteer Information





# General Information

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Story Dogs is based on the successful American literacy program Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.). The R.E.A.D program was launched in 1999 in Utah USA, as the first comprehensive literacy program built around the appealing idea of children and young adolescents reading to dogs.

Story Dogs improves children's reading and communication skills by employing a powerful method - reading to a dog. But not just any dog. Story Dogs are accredited animals who volunteer with their owner/handler as a team, visiting schools.

## Why dogs?

Learning to read is often less about intellectual limitation than about overcoming fears.

"Fear can destroy intelligence," says educator William Ayers. Animals are ideal reading companions because they help increase relaxation and lower blood pressure, listen attentively, do not judge, laugh or criticise, allow children to proceed at their own pace, and are less intimidating than peers or adults.

(source: [www.therapyanimals.org/read/](http://www.therapyanimals.org/read/))

## Which dogs?

All breeds can be used except for restricted dog breeds. The dog's temperament, obedience, willingness and other training is of utmost importance. Dogs must pass an accreditation test carried out by a certified dog trainer, as well as being vaccinated, immaculately groomed with regular vet checks.

## The handler

The handler of the dog is generally the dog's owner who is trained in basic literacy education. This ensures the handler will not judge the child and will be able to help in ways that will best improve the child's chances of better reading. Dog Teams are fully insured and handlers have submitted a working with children background check as per State legislation.

## Children

The children are usually from Stage 1, primarily Year 2. Students are chosen by the school. Story Dogs does not assess the children in any way as the sessions are designed to be as non-threatening as possible. We rely on assessment results taken throughout the year by the school. Parental consent is required before a child can participate in the program.

## A Story Dog reading session

Reading sessions take place in a quiet area of the school grounds, such as the library or the verandah outside the classroom. A large part of the first session with the dog team is introductions so the child gets to know the dog and handler and vice versa. A reading session is approximately 20 minutes long, where each child is one-on-one with the dog team. Books are chosen to suit the child's reading level. During the session the handler often speaks through the dog, such as; "Lassie doesn't quite understand what is happening on this page could you help him out?" The child becomes the teacher; confidence soars!

## The magic

The non-judgmental, loving nature of dogs gives this program its magic. Children relax, open up, try harder and *have fun* reading with a dog.



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# 9 Easy Steps

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**The commitment expected from Story Dogs volunteers is to visit the school of your choice every week on the same day and time for approximately 2 hours. Students come to rely on their Story Dog Team so it is very important that you have the available time for at least four school terms.**

There are some very important steps which need to be taken before you can start helping children to have fun reading.

## **Your dog:**

1. Your dog must be at least 12 months old. If you have rescued or adopted this animal, you must have lived with it for a minimum of 6 months.
2. Your dog must be registered with your local council. Proof of registration will be necessary.
3. Your dog must be vaccinated. Proof of vaccination will be necessary.
4. Practice the Dog Team Assessment with your dog. When you are confident that you and your dog are OK with all nine requirements, let us know and we will organise an accreditation session with our Dog Team Assessor.
5. Your dog's health is very important to us. Your dog must have a recent vet health check (within the last 3 months) or a Story Dogs Vet Health Check. See enclosed Vet Health Check Record Sheet to take to your vet if necessary.

## **You:**

6. As you will be working with children you will have to comply with State legislation. You will have to complete the necessary background checks / forms depending on what State you will be volunteering in.
7. Training – 6hrs. Introduction to the Story Dogs program. Expectations – What do Story Dogs expect from its volunteers and what you should expect from Story Dogs. How to run a Story Dogs session. Literacy - how do kids learn, how can we best help them.
8. In School Training - 2hrs. Being an observer to an experienced Story Dog volunteer.
9. With our help; find a sponsor for you and your dog.



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# Dog Team Assessment Summary

**Dog Team Assessment** - These are the main tasks the dog and handler are tested on.

<p><b>1. Greeting behaviour and appearance of dog</b></p> <p>HANDLER: Give sit cue; assessor will approach and shake hands with handler. DOG: Must be calm, take sit cue and stay while assessor shakes hands and leaves.</p>
<p><b>2. Dog being handled</b></p> <p>HANDLER: Give sit cue; assessor will pat the dog; gently pull tail, ears; and gently hug the dog. DOG: Must be under control; not become anxious or intolerant; take sit cue and allow gentle patting hugging and holding. Dog does NOT have to hold the sit after initial patting.</p>
<p><b>3. Walking on a loose leash</b></p> <p>HANDLER: Walk dog on loose leash past other dogs in pattern indicated by assessor. Stop and sit your dog. DOG: Walks at same pace as handler without pulling. Ignores other dogs. Stops and sits.</p>
<p><b>4. Dog Recall</b></p> <p>HANDLER: Have your dog in a sit or down, give a 'stay' cue. Walk to the end of the leash, pause and return to your dog. Walk to the end of the leash again and on cue from assessor, recall your dog. DOG: Must stay on a sit / down position until called</p>
<p><b>5. Walk past toys, balls, food in a lunch box (or other objects)</b></p> <p>HANDLER: Dog teams walks within one meter of objects and food in a lunch box on the ground. DOG: Must see the toy, balls, objects and not lunge at them. The dog must walk away from the objects when cued.</p>
<p><b>6. "Drop It" with toy, ball or other object</b></p> <p>HANDLER: Allow the dog to pick up the toy, ball or other object. Cue the dog to drop or release the object. DOG: Must release the object willingly and not try and grab it again.</p>
<p><b>7. Setting up for a Story Dogs session</b></p> <p>HANDLER: Walk the dog to the Story Dogs reading spot, put blanket on the ground, give cue for dog to sit or lie down on the blanket. Sit on the blanket with the dog. A 'child' will sit on the rug with the handler and dog. A handler may also sit on a chair with the dog and 'child' on the rug if that is more comfortable. DOG: Must be under control at all times, go into a down on cue and stay in the down position for at least 3 mins. The dog must remain calm and well behaved towards the 'child'</p>
<p><b>8. Child/Dog Interactions</b></p> <p>HANDLER: Chat with 'child' about your dog, show 'child' the correct way to pat a dog. If the dog does not like to be touched in specific areas please explain this to the 'child' and make suggestions about what the dog enjoys. Read with the 'child' for several minutes. Handler then lets the 'child' interact with the dog such as gentle patting or handler shows 'child' how to cue dog to do simple trick as a reward for reading. Simple tricks such as spin, roll over, shake hands, play dead, etc can be used. Tricks are optional, so if no trick is known by the dog team that is OK. DOG: To remain calm and should be on the rug, unless performing a simple trick. The dog may move away from the 'child' or rug and should not be forced to stay close or on the rug.</p>
<p><b>9. Dog's reaction to distractions</b></p> <p>HANDLER: Stay seated with your dog while several loud noises are made, eg. Dropping of objects, opening an umbrella, blowing a whistle or a ball is bounced nearby. Handler can reassure the dog during this exercise. DOG: The dog may react to the distractions but should not panic, try to run away, show aggression, growl or bark. Dog must regain composure quickly.</p>



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# Annual Vet Health Check Record Sheet

Name of Vet: \_\_\_\_\_ Vet Practice: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Dog: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Dog Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Temp =	RR (respiratory rate) =	HR (heart rate) =
DS (dental score) =	MM/CRT (mucous membrane/Capillary refill time) =	BS (Body score) =

	Normal	Abnormal		Normal	Abnormal
Abdominal palpation			Eyes		
Thoracic auscultation			Ears		
Demeanor/Mentation			Lumps/bumps		
Lymph nodes palpation			Musculoskeletal		
Integument			Fleas		
Urinary tract			Other: eg. dog's breath, teeth		

## Intestinal Parasites/Worms

In order for a Story Dog to continue to have contact with children it must be on a regular worming program. It must also be wormed appropriately, for the area it is living in, at this Annual Health Check. Please confirm the following:-

- The dog is on a regular program of intestinal worming treatment applicable to the area it is living in? **Yes / No**
- The dog has received an intestinal worming treatment, including additional treatment for hydatid tapeworm if applicable? **Yes / No**

## Overall outcome of Health Check

General health check result: **poor / good /excellent**

As a result of this general Health Check I recommend (dogs name) \_\_\_\_\_ is of good health to be part of the Story Dogs program.

Signature of Vet: \_\_\_\_\_

Please email or post to [info@storydogs.org.au](mailto:info@storydogs.org.au) or PO Box 5075 Murwillumbah South NSW 2484



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# Expectations

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Welcome to Story Dogs as a Volunteer. Being part of the Story Dog Team means that there are certain things we (Story Dogs) expect from you and, rightly so, there are things that you, as a volunteer, should expect from Story Dogs.

## Story Dogs expectations of volunteers

**Be prompt and dependable.** Please call at least one day in advance, to let us know you will not be at school at your scheduled time.

**Sign in and out** upon arrival and departure. Greet teachers and office staff to let them know you have arrived.

**Bring a smile** and your willingness to work.

**Be honest** in your approach and attitude.

**Be patient** when working with children. They may be having difficulties of which you are not aware. Your patience will work wonders.

**Be flexible** in responding to the needs of children and the often changing school schedules

**Be confidential.** A child's work and behavior in school is to be held in confidence. Discuss problems with the staff, not with other volunteers, parents, or in the community.

**Be a positive role model** for children in attitude, behavior, language and dress. Let your conversations demonstrate respect for others, and avoid language that may be perceived as discriminatory, sexist or offensive.

**Notify a school staff member** if a child confides about an abusive situation. School staff will do the necessary follow-up.

**Communicate.** Ask questions, share ideas, get to know the school staff and other volunteers. Every problem can be solved with respect and honest communication.

**Protect privacy.** Do not ask for a child's address or phone number. Do not share your address or phone number with the children.



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# Expectations

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**Follow “safe touch” suggestions.** Volunteers must not *initiate* touching a child (eg. handholding, hugs, lap-sitting). Rather than you receiving or giving hugs, encourage the child to pat or stroke your dog.

**Be respectful of children’s diversity** of culture, religion, and background. Don’t assume the child celebrates the same holidays (Christmas, Easter, Halloween, or even their birthday). Also don’t assume the make-up of a child’s “family” (eg. size, race or gender). Practice correct pronunciation of the children’s names if they are unfamiliar.

**Ensure positive closure.** If you plan on ending your volunteer involvement before the end of the year, please notify us. It is especially important that the children be left with the clear message that you have enjoyed working with them.

**Look after your dog.** Ensure that your dog is clean, well groomed with up-to-date vaccinations and worming.

**Pick up after your dog.** Always pick up after your dog’s toileting.

**A sick dog.** Do not visit if your dog is showing signs of illness, skin lesions or undue stress.

**Photographs.** Please do not take photographs of students.

**Provide feedback.** Provide regular feedback to the classroom teacher, Principal (if appropriate) and Story Dogs regarding the program and/or individual student’s progress/behaviour. Please complete our record sheet after each visit.

**Report incidents.** Report any incident to the school and to Story Dogs and follow any required procedures.

**Volunteer Catch Ups.** Attend end of term volunteer catch ups. This is when book bags are swapped, additional training may occur and vital feedback is about the program is given.





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# Expectations

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## Volunteer expectations of Story Dogs

We have outlined what we believe you should expect from us and these will be discussed in our training. Any additional expectations you have of Story Dogs will also be discussed on that day. This is some of the support you can expect from Story Dogs.

**Essential tools.** To be provided with the essential items necessary to undertake reading sessions.

**Training.** To be provided with adequate training to equip you with the necessary skills to undertake reading sessions with children. These training sessions will cover:-

- How children learn to read
- How you can prompt children if they are having difficulties
- Expectations of both volunteers and Story Dogs
- How be more aware of your dog and its needs – does s/he need a break? Is s/he hot? Is s/he getting agitated?
- The opportunity to observe a volunteer in a reading session

**Dog Training.** To be given assistance, if necessary, so that your dog can complete the Dog Team Assessment satisfactorily.

**Support.** To be given ongoing support in your role as a volunteer.

**Updates.** To be provided with regular updates on the organisation, its policies, its people and its programs

**Be heard.** To have a part in planning, making suggestions, and being shown respect for an honest opinion.

**An equal.** To be treated as an equal, not just free help.





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# Volunteer Costs

At Story Dogs Inc, we will endeavor to make your volunteering experience as close to cost neutral as possible. Generally, we will reimburse any expenses to do with yourself and your dog which directly relate to your activities with Story Dogs. Here is a list of possible expenses you may encounter and who is responsible for them.

Item Description	Responsible for costs	
	Story Dogs	Volunteer
Volunteer Vest with logo (suitable to wear in summer and winter)	✓	
Dog Vest with logo	✓	
Training Kit - including reading rug, DVD, training manual	✓	
Polo shirt with logo (optional)		✓
Insurance	✓	
Additional dog training courses if necessary		✓
Accreditation of Dog Team	✓	
Training of Dog Team after accreditation of dog	✓	
Dog - Initial Vet Health Check (pre start)		✓
Dog - Annual vet health check	✓(\$35)*	
Dog - vaccinations		✓
Dog - worming treatments		✓
Dog - flea treatments		✓
Dog - nail clipping, grooming		✓
Dog - Council registration, including micro chipping		✓
Fuel & vehicle costs		✓

\*this is the amount you will be reimbursed regardless of what your Vet charges



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# Application Form

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## PERSONAL DETAILS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (Mob) \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

If you have a current Working With Children Check card please provide the number and expiry date

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a preferred school you would like to volunteer at? \_\_\_\_\_

Brief employment history: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Qualifications:

\_\_\_\_\_

List any skills you have that are relevant to volunteering with Story Dogs:

\_\_\_\_\_

List any volunteer work you have been involved in:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe why you would like to be a part of Story Dogs' reading support program:


\_\_\_\_\_

 Phone: 0411 536 355  Email: [info@storydogs.org.au](mailto:info@storydogs.org.au) 

 Address: PO Box 5075 Sth Murwillumbah NSW 2484 

 [www.storydogs.org.au](http://www.storydogs.org.au)  ABN: 32 603 311 388



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# Application Form

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## DETAILS ABOUT YOUR DOG

Name of dog: \_\_\_\_\_ Male/Female Breed: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Desexed? Y/N How long have you owned your dog? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your dog registered with a local council? Y / N Council Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Is your dog used to being around children? Y / N Children outside your family? Y / N

Is your dog socialized with other dogs? Y / N

Generally do you trust your dog with all dogs they meet? Y / N If No, please give situations and potential reasons \_\_\_\_\_

Has your dog ever snapped/snarled/growled at anyone? Y / N If Yes, please give situations and potential reasons \_\_\_\_\_

Has your dog ever bitten anyone? Y / N If Yes, please give situations and potential reasons \_\_\_\_\_

Has your dog attended puppy training? Y / N

Is your dog trained in basic obedience/pet manners, to a reasonable standard. Y / N

Is your dog vaccinated? Y / N Is your dog regularly wormed? Y / N If Yes how frequently \_\_\_\_\_

What is your dog's favourite toy?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## If you do not own the dog you intend to use for Story Dogs please fill out the following:

Name of dogs' owner \_\_\_\_\_

Your relationship with the owner (eg neighbour, friend, family member) \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known the dog? \_\_\_\_\_

Please list your involvement with the dog and the frequency (eg walk dog every day, dog visits every week, dog sit once a month, etc) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your application and interest in the Story Dogs program. Please post to the address below.

 Phone: 0411 536 355  Email: [info@storydogs.org.au](mailto:info@storydogs.org.au) 

 Address: PO Box 5075 Sth Murwillumbah NSW 2484 

 [www.storydogs.org.au](http://www.storydogs.org.au)  ABN: 32 603 311 388