



## Paws and Progress: Learning with Animals

Animals have always been a part of human life, but did you know they can help us learn too? Animal-assisted learning, or AAL, includes different programs that involve animals to make learning easier or more fun. From reading to therapy, animals can help people (1)\_\_\_\_\_ their skills, focus better, and even feel calmer. Let's look at some examples of animal-assisted learning and how these programs help people, (2)\_\_\_\_\_ teenagers.

One popular program for kids and teens is reading to dogs in libraries. Many students feel (3)\_\_\_\_\_ when reading aloud in front of other people. However, when they read to a friendly dog, they feel relaxed and are less afraid of making (4)\_\_\_\_\_. In these programs, trained dogs sit quietly and listen while kids read to them. The dog's presence makes reading feel less stressful. Many libraries in the U.S. and Canada have "Paws for Reading" programs where young readers can read to dogs for 15-20 minutes. Studies have shown that children who participate in these programs improve their reading (5)\_\_\_\_\_ and gain confidence.

Some schools are now using therapy animals, such as dogs or even rabbits, to help students with anxiety and stress. These therapy animals are trained to stay calm and friendly, so students feel comfortable around them. For example, therapy dogs in classrooms can help students with ADHD (Attention-(6)\_\_\_\_\_/Hyperactivity Disorder) focus better. When students pet or sit near these animals, they feel calmer, which can help them pay more attention to their schoolwork. Schools in the UK, for example, have started including therapy animals as a way to help students improve their focus and (7)\_\_\_\_\_ health.

Another unique type of animal-assisted learning is working with horses. In some programs, students learn to care for and ride horses. Horses are sensitive to human emotions, so being around them helps people develop empathy, patience, and confidence. Some teens who have (8)\_\_\_\_\_ in traditional classrooms find they learn better when they interact with animals. Programs like "Equine-Assisted Learning" allow teenagers to learn life skills, such as teamwork and problem-solving, by taking (9)\_\_\_\_\_ of horses and practicing riding techniques.

But why do animals help us learn? Studies show that spending time with animals lowers stress and increases oxytocin, a hormone that makes us feel good. When we feel relaxed, we can focus better and enjoy learning more. Plus, animals don't (10)\_\_\_\_\_ us if we make mistakes, which is why they're perfect learning partners.

Whether it's reading to a dog, working with a horse, or spending time with a therapy animal, learning with animals is becoming more popular. These programs offer a fun and comforting way to learn skills and build confidence.



### Word Bank

skills, mental, care, nervous, improve, Deficit, judge, mistakes, especially, difficulties, study