



Techniques to Enhance the Read-Aloud Experience

Techniques to help you make the most of your read-aloud experience:

- ⇒ Try to establish a regular time for reading aloud.
- ⇒ Find a quiet, comfortable place. With young children, snuggling together while reading is important.
- ⇒ Remove background distractions so that the reading experience takes precedence.
- ⇒ Select a book that you like (and have previewed) and that you think the child will like too.
- ⇒ Point out the cover illustration and the names of the book's author and illustrator.
- ⇒ Have fun bringing the characters and events to life. Read with expression.
- ⇒ Read slowly enough for children to take in the words and look at the pictures.
- ⇒ Stop during the reading to invite children to complete a predictable phrase or sentence, to guess what might happen next, or to think about how they themselves might react in a similar situation.
- ⇒ Encourage children to ask questions.
- ⇒ Watch the children's body language; children may need to take a break or to end the session early. Try to determine whether the child just needs to fidget or whether the child finds the story boring.
- ⇒ Talk about the book afterward. Be sure to elicit the child's reaction.
- ⇒ If a frequently read book is read aloud, ask the child to retell the story in his or her own words.



Additional tips for reading with expression: ¹

- ⇒ Reading aloud is not enough—you need to read aloud well.
- ⇒ As you read the story, remain aware of your body position, your eyes and their expression, your eye contact with the child, your vocal variety, and your general facial animation.



- ⇒ If you read a story without allowing its emotional value to show through your eyes, you're wasting a prime asset.
- ⇒ In choosing a reading voice, don't go too far. Avoid using a cutesy, sugary, patronizing voice. Try to never talk down to children.
- ⇒ You can do at least seven things with your voice to keep children engaged during read-alouds. Six of these seven vocal gymnastics are contrasts: loud and soft, fast and slow, and high and low. And you can p-a-u-s-e. The words on the page will tell you which to choose. You don't need speech training.
- ⇒ The way you speak your first line should be sensational.
- ⇒ If anything could be more important than the first line of a story, it's the last line. Drag out the last line; the more slowly you say it, the more satisfied your listeners will be.

¹ Adapted from Mem Fox. *Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever*. Harcourt, Inc. San Diego, CA.2001.

