

Read Aloud Tips



This tip sheet is focused on reading picture books aloud with one child or with a group of children of any age and all capabilities. It is designed for adults who are new to reading aloud with children, or as a refresher for experienced story sharers. Whatever category you're in, we hope you'll continue reading with the children in your lives for many years to come.



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Reading aloud to children fosters:

- ▶ A delight in stories and a love of reading
- ▶ Curiosity, imagination, and critical thinking
- ▶ A connection between the reader and listener(s)
- ▶ Vocabulary, comprehension, and visual literacy
- ▶ Confidence as a learner

The toolkit is divided into four sections:

- ▶ Section 1: Basic tips for reading aloud to a group of children in person
- ▶ Section 2: Tips for reading to children remotely
- ▶ Section 3: Tips for reading to an individual child (In-person and Virtual)
- ▶ Section 4: Additional Resources

If you have additional tips and strategies, particularly for sharing Ezra Jack Keats Award books aloud, we'd love to hear from you! Please email Jocelyn McCarthy at jmccarthy@ezra-jack-keats.org.

Ezra Jack Keats Award: Read Alouds

Section 1: Tips for reading aloud to a group of children in person



First and foremost, choose a book that you LOVE to read aloud. Your enthusiasm for the story will make the experience special for the children.

Think about your purpose, audience, and context.

- ▶ Who are you reading the story to?
- ▶ Why do you want to read a story aloud?
- ▶ What feelings and/or ideas are you trying to inspire with the story?
- ▶ In what environment are you sharing the story?
- ▶ Will the time you have for your reading allow for questions and discussion?

Practice reading the book aloud knowing all may not go exactly as planned.

- ▶ Become familiar with all aspects of the text and illustrations before you share the book with an audience.
- ▶ Don't be afraid of mistakes. Show your listeners that making mistakes and correcting them are part of the learning and reading processes.
- ▶ Be ready for an unexpected mishap, and of course, audience participation.

Decide if you're going to read the book performatively (from start to finish without stopping) or interactively (pausing periodically to engage your audience members in discussion)

- ▶ Let your listeners know when to listen and when to ask questions and share observations about the story.
- ▶ If you want to prepare discussion questions to prompt their thinking, please refer to our Themed Discussion Guides.

Decide how and when you'll share the illustrations with your audience. Consider what resources may be at your disposal, as well as the size of your audience.

- ▶ Know if you'll show the pictures before you read, as you read or after you read the text.
- ▶ Consider using a projector, document camera (doc cam) or share digital text through a smartboard, if possible.

If you're comfortable with props or storyboards, they might enhance your delivery. Some ideas include:

- ▶ Hats or costumes relevant to the story.
- ▶ A display that features characters or items from the story created by the children or reader.
- ▶ Ask children to re-enact the story using two or three dimensional character cut-outs.

While reading the book

Start by identifying the author and illustrator:

- ▶ This reminds the listeners that the text and illustrations are created by specific people.
- ▶ It helps the children build a repertoire of favorite authors and illustrators for future reading.

Introduce the endpapers, title page, and any additional front and back matter:

- ▶ You don't have to read all of the front and back matter aloud.
- ▶ You can inform listeners about the contents
- ▶ Share the interesting and relevant tidbits you've gathered.

Pace your delivery.

- ▶ The book may be new to your audience.
- ▶ Give them time to process the story and view the illustrations.

Make eye contact with individual listeners as you read the story.

- ▶ This makes each listener feel that you're reading to THEM.
- ▶ Using different voices or inflections or different characters makes each more distinct and alive to the listeners.
- ▶ Transmit information with facial expressions and your listeners will see how much enthusiasm you have for the story.

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Section 2: Basic Tips for Reading Remotely



The tips for in person reading aloud apply to reading remotely, but for remote reading, practice is much more important. You also have to adapt your delivery to your technology and recording environment, as well as your audience.

Book Selection:

- ▶ Choosing a book that you love is even more important when reading remotely.
- ▶ Make sure to get permission to read/record the book online.
- ▶ Most publishers have copyright policies for remote readings on their websites.
- ▶ Tell your listeners why you love the book and why you chose it.

Practice with your technology:

- ▶ Make sure you know how to use the devices and platforms you're employing.
- ▶ Make trial recordings of yourself to correct problems:
 - ▶ Good front light, no backlight
 - ▶ Clear picture, stable camera, properly centered
 - ▶ Good sound, no background noise
 - ▶ Read into the camera lens, not the preview screen, so you're looking at your audience.
 - ▶ Use a remote control if possible to start and stop recording so you don't have to lean over.
 - ▶ Make sure not to cover your face or mouth while reading or showing the book to the listeners.

If making a pre-recorded storytime, with simple video editing software, you can:

- ▶ Create an opening and closing to your read-aloud.
- ▶ Add cover and images from the book to enhance the visual experience.

While Reading the Book

Connect with your audience:

- ▶ Watching your pace is especially important for remote storytelling. Make sure to use a gentle, conversational speed.
- ▶ Indicate that permission has been granted for the book to be shared via social media or a recording.
- ▶ Engage with your viewers/listeners:
 - ▶ Welcome them to your virtual storytime.
 - ▶ Introduce yourself and the book before diving in.
 - ▶ Identify the publisher, etc.
 - ▶ Share tidbits about the book including why you like it and want to share it.
 - ▶ Ask the same questions and make the same observations you would if they were in a room with you, so the read-aloud experience is as interactive as possible.

Show the illustrations:

- ▶ Have the camera pointed at you holding the book facing outward, or
- ▶ Point the camera down at the open book on a level surface, or
- ▶ Make a powerpoint with an illustration on each slide to show in between your reading of the text.

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Section 3: Tips for Reading Aloud to One Child



Many of the tips for group read alouds also apply to reading aloud to one child, though reading to one child is often a spontaneous event.

Book selection:

- ▶ Letting the child select the book for reading aloud gives them ownership of the experience.
- ▶ If you don't know the book chosen, take a few moments to familiarize yourself with it.

Adapt your style:

With an audience of one, you can modify the pacing and the incorporation of questions based upon the needs and preferences of the child at that moment.

Know your goals:

- ▶ Are you trying to calm the child for bedtime?
- ▶ Are you trying to teach the child about a subject or about modifying their behavior?
- ▶ Are you trying to get to know the child a little better, or make the child more comfortable with you?
- ▶ Are you trying to give a tired caregiver a break?

One-on-one reading can be a very special bonding experience for families and caregivers as well as providing educational enrichment.



Megan Dowd Lambert

EJK Award Honor recipient and author of *Reading Picture Books with Children: How to Shake Up Storytime and Get Kids Talking About What They See*.

"In my work... I make the distinction between reading picture books with children and reading picture books to children. Firmly situating myself on the with side of this equation has led to countless storytimes in which I've seen kids' hearts and minds in action as they've embraced, interrogated, enjoyed, and resisted what they've found in the picture books we've shared."

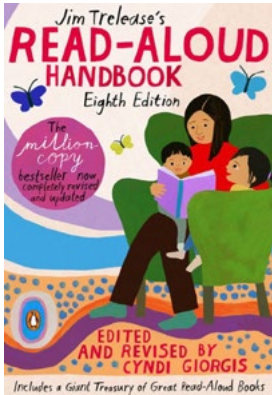
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Additional Resources



Additional Resources for Reading Aloud

We've offered you some of our favorite tips in this toolkit, but you can learn much more about successful reading aloud practices through the following books and websites:



- ▶ *Jim Trelease's Read-Aloud Handbook, Eighth Edition*, edited and revised by Cyndi Giorgis. Penguin, 2019.
- ▶ *Reading Picture Books with Children: How to Shake Up Storytime and Get Kids Talking About What They See* by Megan Dowd Lambert in association with The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art. Charlesbridge, 2015.
- ▶ *In Defense of Read-Aloud: Sustaining Best Practice* by Steven L. Layne. Stenhouse, 2015.
- ▶ [Virtual Storytime Services Guide \(https://www.ala.org/alsc/virtual-storytime-services-resource-guide\)](https://www.ala.org/alsc/virtual-storytime-services-resource-guide). Association for Library Services to Children. American Library Association.
- ▶ ["Hints on How to Read Aloud to a Group." \(https://www.readingrockets.org/article/hints-how-read-aloud-group\)](https://www.readingrockets.org/article/hints-how-read-aloud-group) American Reads at Bank Street College of Education. Reading Rockets.
- ▶ [Publishers Adapt Policies To Help Educators \(https://authorfy.com/publisherpermissions/\)](https://authorfy.com/publisherpermissions/)