

The DON'Ts of Read-Aloud

- Don't read stories that you don't enjoy yourself. Your dislike will show in the reading, and that defeats your purpose.
- Don't continue reading a book once it is obvious that it was a poor choice. Admit the mistake and choose another. Make sure, however, that you've given the book a fair chance to get rolling; some, like *Tuck Everlasting*, start slower than others. (You can avoid the problem by pre-reading at least part of the book yourself.)
- Don't tie everything you read to the curriculum. Would you want everything you did all day tied to a sermon?
- If you are a teacher, don't feel you have to tie every book to class work. Don't confine the broad spectrum of literature to the narrow limits of the curriculum.
- Don't overwhelm your listener. Consider the intellectual, social, and emotional level of your audience in making a read-aloud selection. Never read above a child's emotional level.
- Don't select a book that many of the children already have heard or seen on television. Once a novel's plot is known, much of their interest is lost. You can, however, read a book and view the video afterward. That's a good way for children to see how much more can be portrayed in print than on film.
- In choosing novels for reading aloud, avoid books that are heavy with dialogue; they are difficult reading aloud and listening. All those indented paragraphs and quotations make for easy silent reading. The reader sees the quotations marks and knows it is a new voice, a different person speaking—but the listener doesn't. And if the writer fails to include a notation at the end of the dialogue, like "said Mrs. Murphy," the audience has no idea who said what.
- Don't be fooled by awards. Just because a book won an award doesn't guarantee that it will make a good read-aloud. In most cases, a book award is given for the quality of the writing, not for its read-aloud qualities.
- Don't start reading if you are not going to have enough time to do it justice. Having to stop after one or two pages only serves to frustrate, rather than stimulate, the child's interest in reading.
- Don't be over impressed by book awards. Most of the great read-alouds never won a Newbery or Caldecott medal.
- Don't get too comfortable while reading. A reclining or slouching position is most apt to bring on drowsiness. A reclining position sends an immediate message to the heart...slow down. With less blood being pumped, less oxygen reaches the brain—thus drowsiness.
- Don't be unnerved by questions during the reading, particularly from very young children in your own family. If the question is obviously not for the purpose of distracting or postponing bedtime, answer the question patiently. There is no time limit for reading a book, but there is a time limit on a child's inquisitiveness. Foster that curiosity with patient answers—then resume your reading. Classroom questions, however, need to be held until the end. With twenty children all deciding to ask questions to impress the teacher, you might never reach the end of the book.
- Don't impose interpretations of a story upon your audience. A story can be just plain enjoyable, no reason necessary, and still give you plenty to talk about. The highest literacy gains occur with children who have access to discussions following a story.

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- Don't confuse quantity with quality. Reading to your child for ten minutes, with your full attention and enthusiasm, may very well last longer in the child's mind than two hours of solitary television viewing.
 - Don't use the book as a threat—"If you don't pick up your room, no story tonight!" As soon as your child or class sees that you've turned the book into a weapon, they'll change their attitude about books from positive to negative.
 - Don't try to compete with television. If you say, "Which do you want, a story or TV?" they will usually choose the latter. That is like saying to a nine-year-old, "Which do you want, vegetables or a donut?" Since you are the adult, you choose. "The television goes off at eight-thirty in this house. If you want a story before bed, that's fine. If not, that's fine, too. But no television after eight-thirty." But don't let books appear to be responsible for depriving the children of viewing time.

A free brochure of the points on this page is available for downloading at:
www.trelease-on-reading.com/parent-reading-brochure.html.