

Ten Tips for Reading Aloud

1. **Match the reading style to the book** – While there are some books that work well with a quieter, deadpan style, a book like Betty G. Birney's *The World According to Humphrey* works well with a playful style and lots of enthusiasm.
2. **How to make time** – Prioritize in order to make the daily reading an important part of your routine. Sometimes this means putting off a chore, and sometimes it may mean not watching a television show. You can read to your child at bedtime or fit it in between other activities. It only takes about 15 minutes to read each chapter.
3. **Punch vocabulary** – Make the language in a story more interesting by choosing a word in each sentence and doing something more with it: enunciate it, whisper it, elongate it, emphasize it! It will help capture your child's interest and enliven the prose.
4. **Pause** – This is one of three tips that help reset your child's attention span and can be used to heighten drama or suspense or emotional impact. In this case, pay special attention to punctuation marks: every comma and period, hyphen and set of parentheses. Some sentences are written with an intentional pause to get the listener's attention.
5. **Slow down** – This is another tip that helps to reset your child's attention span, and it also heightens drama, suspense, and emotion; however, it is not the same as pausing. Slowing down means adjusting the pace of a sentence or a paragraph. Your listener will notice immediately.
6. **Whisper** – Everyone knows the whisper effect when you want to make someone pay even closer attention. This third tip will help your child to become more focused. It also heightens drama and suspense and can make the characters really "pop".

These three tips – Pause, Slow Down, & Whisper – are the true essence of effective reading aloud.

7. **Accents and voices** – Borrow from everywhere to mimic different voices. Your kids don't care how silly you sound, only that the voices in a dialogue are different and distinct, bringing the characters to life. Also, give each character some identifying trait or mannerism to make it easier to distinguish their voices.
8. **Ask questions** – Use the opportunity of reading a book together to ask questions before, during, and after. This serves multiple purposes: to rehearse or remember characters or plot developments, to explore moral or ethical questions that may arise, and to make associations with other books and media.
9. **Quiz them yourself** – This is not to make reading like schoolwork; instead, it helps to serve as a memory cue. Kids love showing off their knowledge, having a reason to pay even closer attention, owning a book or story thoroughly and in detail. Pretty soon, they'll be asking you questions!
10. **Permit another activity** – Kids will get distracted - for a good reason: because they've made an association and are pursuing it. When pausing and whispering and slowing down aren't enough, it's okay to let them color or draw or doodle - or braid their hair or wash the dishes - to let their restless minds re-focus on your story.