

Read-Aloud Pitfalls



What's one of the best ways you can help your children become good readers? Reading books aloud to them.

You don't need to be an excellent reader or to have a great voice. All it takes is a pleasant, relaxed attitude. You want your kids to get the message that "Reading is fun. Let's do it again soon."

Some parents try so hard to make the most of reading time that the enjoyment gets lost. Here's a look at common read-aloud pitfalls, how they can affect kids, and simple ways to avoid them.

The Briber

Pitfall: You want your child to love reading, so you offer her a reward for every book you read to her.

Result: Your child was interested in reading. Now all she seems to care about is how many prizes she has collected.

Better: Let the motivation be the pleasure of reading and the time you spend together. If not, the joy of reading will be lost in favor of the prize.



The Chooser

Pitfall: You've picked out a book you want to read aloud. It's all about birds.

Result: The trouble is, your child's not interested. He doesn't like birds. He wants you to read the dump truck book, or the one about the tigers.

Better: Most children want to choose the books you read aloud. When they do, they're more likely to pay attention. If you have a book you'd like to read, try reading it *after* you read a book your child has chosen.

The Limit Setter

Pitfall: Your child keeps asking questions. You feel frustrated by constantly being interrupted to answer them. So, you decide to limit them.

Result: Your child may not understand the story. Sometimes he needs to ask questions and hear your explanation to get the meaning.

Better: Research shows it's valuable to stop along the way to answer your child's questions. The benefits of reading aloud are greatest when children can actively take part in the process.

The Marathon Runner

Pitfall: You're determined to read several books to your child in one sitting—no matter how long it takes.

Result: Your child isn't interested in hearing more than one, and she's not paying attention. All she wants to do is go play with her friends.

Better: Let your child's interest guide the amount of reading you do. If she's following a story, by all means, keep reading. But if you're losing her, bring read-aloud time to an end until tomorrow.



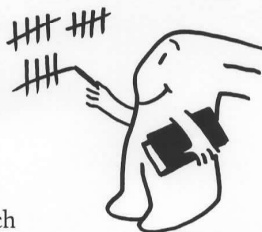


The One-Timer

Pitfall: Your child wants to hear the same book for the millionth time. You don't think you can stand to read it again.

Result: Your child misses a chance to hear her favorite book. She loves knowing what's going to happen and never tires of hearing the same thing over and over again.

Better: Before you begin reading a favorite book, explain that you'll only read it once per session. It's natural for young children to want to hear the same book repeatedly. And natural for you to get weary of it. *Note:* Research shows that repeated readings help your child learn to recognize new words—a very valuable part of building "sight" vocabulary.



The Postponer

Pitfall: You keep planning to read aloud day after day, but it never seems to happen.

Result: Your child thinks that you don't care about reading. After a while, he doesn't seem interested in reading.

Better: Set aside a time each day when you and your child can cozy up together and read. Many parents choose to read books at bedtime. After a while, it'll become a habit you'll both enjoy.

The Professor

Pitfall: You want to challenge your child. You steer away from books that are short and easy.

Result: Your child seems interested at first but soon gets bored. Why? Because she can't understand what you are reading. The book may be too complicated or long.

Better: Look for a variety of reading material—some easy, some hard, some short, some long. Glance at your child now and then to make sure she's still paying attention.

The Questioner

Pitfall: You want your child to develop thinking skills. While you're reading, you stop every page or two to ask questions.

Result: The only thing your child can focus on is what's going to happen next in the story. He wishes you'd just keep reading without asking questions.

Better: Let the story flow naturally. If you interrupt to ask too many questions of your own, your child may become confused. It's always a good idea to talk about a book or ask questions, but save most until the end. *Examples:* "Who was your favorite character?" "Why?" "Did you ever have anything like that happen to you?"



The Sprinter

Pitfall: You're in a hurry. You have to leave in 10 minutes, but you promised your child you'd read a book.

Result: She just got comfy on your lap, but knows you're in a rush. Instead of listening, she starts wriggling and giving you a hard time for leaving.

Better: One of the most common reading mistakes is reading too quickly. Your child needs lots of time to form mental images in her head. It's better to read a few pages slowly than to rush through a book. ♥

