

1. **Begin** reading to children as soon as possible. The younger you start them, the easier and better it is.
2. **With** infants through toddlers, it's important to include books that contain repetitions; as they mature, add predictable and rhyming books.
3. **During** repeat readings of a predictable book, occasionally stop at a key phrase and allow the child to provide the words.
4. **Read** as often as you and the child (or students) have time for.
5. **Set aside** at least one traditional time each day for a story.
6. **Remember:** The art of listening is an acquired one. It must be taught and cultivated gradually—it doesn't happen overnight.
7. **Start** with picture books that have only a few sentences on the page, then gradually move to books with more text, fewer pictures, and build to chapter books.
8. **Vary** the length and subject matter of your readings, fiction and nonfiction.
9. **To encourage** involvement, invite the child to turn pages for you when it is time.
10. **Before** you begin to read the text, always recite the name of the book, the author, and illustrator. The message here is that



books are not created by machines but by people.

11. **The first time** you read a book, discuss the cover illustration. "What do you think this book is going to be about?"
12. **As you read**, keep listeners involved by occasionally asking, "What do you think is going to happen next?"
13. **Picture** books can be read easily to a family of children widely separated in age. Novels, however, pose a challenge. If there are more than two years (and thus social and emotional differences) between the children, each child would benefit greatly if



*Always read the material over beforehand.*

- you read to him or her individually. This requires more effort on the part of the parents, but it will reap rewards in direct proportion to the effort expended.
14. **Avoid** long descriptive passages until the child's imagination and attention span are capable of handling them. There is nothing wrong with shortening or eliminating them. Prereading helps to locate such passages, and they can then be marked with pencil in the margin. Dickens did it often in his public readings.
  15. **If the chapters** are long or if you don't have enough time each day to finish an entire chapter, find a suspenseful spot at which to stop. Leave the audience hanging;

they'll be counting the minutes until the next reading.

16. **Allow** your listeners a few minutes to settle down and adjust their feet and minds to the story. If it's a novel, begin by asking what happened when you left off yesterday. Mood is an important factor in listening. An authoritarian "Now stop that and settle down! Sit up straight. Pay attention" doesn't create a receptive mood.
17. **If you're reading** a picture book, make sure the children can see the pictures easily. In school, with the children in a semi-circle around you, seat yourself just slightly above them so children in the back can see above the heads of the others.
18. **In reading** a novel, position yourself where both you and the children are comfortable. Do not read or stand in front of brightly lit windows. Backlighting strains the eyes of your audience.
19. **Remember** that everyone enjoys a good picture book, even a teenager. If you doubt it, try *Johnny on the Spot* by Edward Sorel with teenagers.
20. **Allow** time for class and home discussion after reading a story. Thoughts, hopes, fears, and discoveries are aroused by a book. Allow them to surface and help the child to deal with them through verbal, written, or artistic expression if the child is so inclined. Do not turn discussions into quizzes or insist upon prying story interpretations from the child.
21. **Remember** that reading aloud comes naturally to very few people. To do it successfully and with ease you must practice.
22. **Use** plenty of expression when reading. If possible, change your tone of voice to fit the dialogue. Adjust your pace to fit the

story. During a suspenseful part, slow down, and lower your voice.

**23. The** most common mistake in reading aloud—whether the reader is a seven-year-old or a forty-year-old—is reading too fast. Read slowly enough for the child to build mental pictures of what he just heard you read. Slow down enough for the children to see the pictures in the book without feeling hurried. Reading quickly allows no time for the reader to use vocal expression.

**24. Preview** the book by reading it to yourself ahead of time. Such advance reading allows you to spot material you may wish to shorten, eliminate, or elaborate on.

**25. Bring** the author to life, as well as his book. Google the author to find a personal Web page, and always read the information on your book's dust jacket. Either before or during the reading, tell your audience something about the author. This lets them know that books are written by people, not by machines.

**26. Add** a third dimension to the book whenever possible. For example, have a bowl of blueberries ready to be eaten during or after the reading of Robert McCloskey's *Blueberries for Sal*.



**27. Encourage** relatives living far away to record stories on audiocassettes that can be mailed to the child. Inviting other faculty members, parents, and local celebrities (like the police chief) to read to the class.

**28. Reluctant** readers or unusually active children frequently find it difficult to just sit and listen. Paper, crayons, and pencils allow them to keep their hands busy while listening. (*You doodle while talking on the telephone, don't you?*)



**29. Fathers** should make an extra effort to read to their children. Because the vast majority of primary-school teachers are women, young boys often associate reading with women and schoolwork. And just as unfortunately, too many fathers would rather be seen playing catch in the driveway with their sons than taking them to the library. It is not by chance that male school scores have taken a dramatic downturn in the last three decades. A father's early involvement with books and reading can do much to elevate books to at least the same status as sports in a boy's estimation.

**30. When** children wish to read to you, it is better for the book to be too easy than too hard, just as a beginner's bicycle is better too small than too big.



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This is a companion brochure to *A Dozen DON'Ts To Remember When Reading Aloud* by Jim Trelease.

For more details on the material contained here, see Jim Trelease's Web site: [www.trelease-on-reading.com](http://www.trelease-on-reading.com). All brochure material is based on his books, films, and lectures.

# THIRTY DO'S TO REMEMBER WHEN READING ALOUD

BY JIM TRELEASE

Author of the New York Times Bestseller  
*The Read-Aloud Handbook*

