

How to Improve Reading Aloud



Reading Aloud is one of the most effective ways for students to improve fluency. Being able to read fluently includes speed, accuracy and expression.

Speed or the rate the child is reading can hinder their comprehension. It is important for students to practise not only reading texts but high frequency words so that it becomes almost effortless. This automatic recognition is important because it allows the reader to pay attention to the meaning of text rather than decoding words. For students to develop a steady speed, they need repeated practice to build up their memory and stamina.

Accurate reading requires the child to be able to pronounce the words correctly. Once the student has the correct pronunciation it allows them to access and recognise words used in their spoken language. Beginning readers will use decoding to help them accurately decode and through repeated practice will read high frequency words more accurately.

Expression includes tone, rhythm, pitch and intonation. For students to develop an expression they first need a lot of practice to achieve accuracy and speed. It is also important for students to understand what they are reading. If a child does not have the strategies to understand a text, they won't be able to read with expression. That is why reading aloud is one of the most effective ways for students to improve their reading.

When we talk about Reading Aloud it does not just refer to the student themselves reading aloud. It is also extremely beneficial for them to hear others read and model the correct behaviours or fluency. That is why to improve fluency during your whole class read-aloud time all you need is a good book, whether that be novels, picture story books, articles or any text, and your students attention.

In this teacher and parent guidance we have included some tips and tricks to get the most out of your students during your class read aloud sessions.

1. Be a good role model

When you read aloud be sure to model the whole reading process. Use your speed, accuracy and expression to keep them engaged. By hearing you respect the punctuation, add tone and rhythm to create excitement or suspense and include character voices, your students will pick up on these skills and translate them to their own reading. For younger students you can even follow along to show the correct way to read a text and point to each word.

2. Practice and Prepare

If you are not confident or comfortable reading aloud, your students can pick up on this. It can be helpful to familiarise yourself with the text you have selected before sharing with your students. You can also use sticky notes as reminders to stop, with questions to ask or thoughts you may want to share to engage the students.

3. Take your time

When you are reading aloud you can read the text more than once. The first time you read through might just be for enjoyment, allowing your students to focus on your expression and accuracy. You can re-read in the same session and this time stop and pause, allow for your students to see and ask questions. This tool shows students that it is okay to read texts more than once to gain understanding.

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4. Encourage students to read aloud

Use the partner reading and ask students to read aloud their favourite book, levelled reader or class text. When students are able to read aloud fluently, they will adapt these skills into their own independent reading. Don't be afraid to try this with new readers! Even if the student doesn't have the accuracy or word knowledge, encourage them to create their own story through the images and still use the expression they have seen. Students have a wide imagination and will surprise you with their level of comprehension.

5. Focus on Reading Strategies

Read alouds are great tools to practise critical thinking skills, such as the Super Six, to increase fluency and comprehension. One thing you can do for early readers is find texts with high frequency sight words and ask students to identify them when you are reading. Older students can focus on predicting, questioning or even vocabulary.

6. Read for fun

This does contradict our above advice, but remember that reading aloud can just be for fun! Students love hearing you read, especially if you are modelling the correct behaviours. Don't be afraid to read a book aloud just for fun, with no specific focus. Even though your students aren't focusing on improving one specific skill they are learning through your modelled behaviour. Often you find students beg you to read for longer, so choose a great class novel (start these from Foundation all the way to Year 6), and let them enjoy the reading ride.

7. Keep on Reading Aloud

No matter their age students love being read to, even picture story books! The ideas for reading aloud with older students who do have more fluency are endless. You can use picture story books and get them to explore themes and hidden meanings. Another great resource is a class novel, you can have different students be the guest reader that day and model their reading to their classmates. Finally, book clubs or literacy groups allow for students to read aloud together and then discuss the book in detail.