

How to **ENJOY READING ALOUD** to Young Children

Workshop Leader's Notes

Introduction

The booklet *How To Enjoy Reading Aloud To Young Children* will help parents and carers feel happier and more confident in reading to their children with clarity and expression. The booklet is full of marked extracts from popular books with clear, fun instructions on ways to read them which help with the rhythm and tone. Although the booklet is not primarily for reading with a child, it can be fun doing some of the exercises with children.

There is a lot of emphasis on 'Speaking and Listening' in the National Curriculum and this booklet is one essential tool to help you improve the standards of speaking and listening delivered by your organisation. By improving the reading aloud skills of your parents / carers you will be boosting their self-esteem and increasing their literacy and those of their children.

Rather than just giving out the booklets to each household you are in contact with we would suggest you support the recipients with an introductory workshop – and this handbook is to help you do just that.

The benefits of reading aloud

There is a wealth of literature and research about **why** and **what** to read that underlines how important it is to read with children from an early age. If you want to make a study of the facts and figures then please use the *Useful Sources* section of these notes.

By sharing reading and storytelling, children gain in confidence, increase their ability to use language and improve in general understanding – all of which help them to be more successful in life. In fact research has shown that growing up in an atmosphere where reading is valued has a more positive effect on a child's achievement than their education or their economic status.

On top of the educational benefits, the time spent together reading helps build personal relationships and, above all, is FUN! But it is even more fun if the story comes alive through **how** it is read...

Books day-to-day

Do you inspire parents and carers to read aloud by making books a daily pleasure in your organisation with any, or all, of the following?

Book corner: your own welcoming library from which the children choose books both to use during the day and to take books home. Do you use your local library to stock this?

Book displays: displaying the results of the children's activities around a theme you have picked, highlighted by chosen books. Your local library has themed lists of books to help you.

Story sacks: given out for home use containing a book and items that support and illustrate the story. Have you got a partnership with a local school to help produce these?

Setting up an *enjoying reading aloud* workshop

Do you want to persuade more parents and carers to take up reading suggestions? Then why not run a reading session, workshop, or open evening aimed at *enjoying reading aloud*? Here are some practical tips on setting up a session.

Who

The whole point of enjoying reading aloud is that anybody can have fun with it if they apply a few simple techniques and **relax** about it! One of your own staff should certainly be able to run the workshop. Alternatively, perhaps you have a willing and able parent or carer. Make contact with your local children's librarians; they would be a good partner for the supply of books, lists, background information and further activities.

The important thing is that whoever is going to be the facilitator needs to be very familiar with the materials in order to get the best out of the attendees and the session.

Time

Give yourself plenty of time to organise the venue and resources, to tie in with a suitable theme and to get it into the diary of busy adults.

Although there may be occasions when it is appropriate to involve the children in such a session we would certainly recommend running some for adults only. This will give the readers space to try out techniques without distraction, particularly if you run it at a time when dads can come!

Place

Although it may be easiest to run the session on your own premises, some adults may feel more comfortable in a completely neutral place, so you could run it in partnership with a local attraction (zoo or museum or park) or the library or in a meeting room in a pub.

Resources

Make sure you have enough copies of *How to Enjoy Reading Aloud to Young Children* to give one away to each family to take home after the session, along with enough reading books for participants to choose from. Have you got a good relationship with your local library that might be able to help supply multiple copies? You could start by using books suggested in the booklet.

Don't forget that magazines and comics are also there to be read.

Reading aloud can be thirsty work so make sure you have plenty of water to hand.

You may want to set up a display about why reading is a 'good thing', either as a paper display on the wall, or as a slides in a preliminary talk – but this is not the main theme of the session so don't spend too long on it.

Numbers

Ten to fifteen people is a manageable number. More than that and it will be difficult to get everybody participating.

Publicity

Involve the children in the invitations, both in producing the 'pictures' and in taking an invitation home.

Talk to as many parents and carers as possible; there is nothing like a personal invite!

Don't forget to display a poster at the entrance as well.

Take photos of the event for use on your display boards and for your local paper – great publicity for your organisation. Remember to get appropriate permissions if there are children in the picture.

Choosing a theme

The main theme is, of course, *enjoying reading aloud!* But to involve those adults who are uncertain about their reading aloud abilities you might want to pick a more specific theme to excite their interest.

If you want to target dads then why not focus the reading material on sport, machines or building things.

If you have a substantial multi-ethnic population then source suitable books with the help of your local library and tie in the session with an appropriate festival. Involve a parent in producing the poster and invitation in the chosen language. The techniques of enjoying reading aloud apply whatever the language! You may even get extra support to run this event from your local authority.

Tie it in with whatever initiative you may already be running, such as 'developing your outdoors' or 'healthy eating', by having the event outside or tied in with a picnic.

Running the session

Share some general background

It is worth just highlighting some of the reasons why it is worth making the effort to a) read aloud with your child, and b) make it fun.

Benefits for the child

- The spell woven by stories and poems told with energy and expression will improve their language skills and develop their imagination.
- They will get into the habit of really listening, and for sustained periods – unlike the quick bites from other media.
- Reading time will become a time they will look forward to, a time of warmth and security.
- It will increase their self-confidence and enhance their social skills.

Benefits for the parents and carers

- Anticipation for a story will more easily get kids to bed! And it gets them to sleep quicker!
- Helps you to cut off from the day's work.
- Reduces stress by entering into a magic world as a reminder of the child within you.

Advice about choosing a book

- Children like familiar books so don't worry if you've read it before!
- You are working with listening skills so you can go for a book aimed at a slightly older age range – your child will soon let you know if they find it boring!
- If you have time to read it to yourself first then that will help you be comfortable with the words and storyline, and give you time to think about how you could read it aloud.
- Above all the adult must enjoy the book because your enjoyment will be catching!

Advice about getting comfortable

- Make sure you are sitting comfortably, but not so comfortably you are going to fall asleep.

- Make sure the child can see and touch the book and that you can move the book around so they can see all the details on the page.
- Be prepared to stop and talk about what you are reading and looking at.
- Encourage your child to join in with making sounds and movements – but don't make them feel they have to.

Get everybody warmed up

1. Ask everybody to make some funny faces to exercise all their facial muscles. Then suggest they give their forehead, temple and neck a quick rub. Finally a few shoulder rolls will help everybody loosen up.
2. Get them to yawn a few times to open up the back of the throat.
3. Hum any note for 10 or more seconds then go up and down their vocal range. Do the same with an open 'Aaah'.
4. Ask everybody to think about the times they use their voice differently to normal speech: at a football match, reacting to a film, singing along to a pop song, telling a joke. Ask for more suggestions.
5. Now ask them to say
 - Boom** – extending to oooo to *Boooooom*
 - Pow** – really sound the *P*
 - Prowls** – extend the *ow* sound to *Praaooowls*
 - Squeeze** – extend the *eee* sound to *Skweeeez*
 - Rumbling** – take the voice down low, feel it deep down in the throat
 - Tumbling** – hit the *T*.
6. Have fun with some tongue twisters like:
 - *She sells seashells by the seashore*
 - *Yellow lorry, red lorry*
 - *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers*
 - *Round the ragged rock the ragged rascal ran.*
 Can anybody suggest any more?

Some important basics

You now need to emphasise that there are **three** things a reader needs to do to hold their listener's attention:

1. draw on their **ENERGY**
2. apply **VARIETY**
3. make use of **PAUSES**

Explain that:

1. **Energy** means using both voice and body. Looking at each other, smiling, making appropriate faces, voices and noises.
2. **Variety** means changing your voice to reflect what is happening in the story. Louder, softer, higher, lower, normal voice, different voice.
3. **Pauses** means taking your time, enjoying the words and the effect of silence as the meaning of what you have just read sinks in.

Pick a book and read a simple sentence first in a flat voice with no energy, no variety and no pauses. Then read it again with energy, variety and a change of pace. Ask for comments and then pass the book round for volunteers to do the same with a different sentence.

A traditional theme

For many of us nursery rhymes and lullabies remind us of our baby- and child-hoods. They will have been part of our vocabulary and counting skills development, encouraging us to enjoy music, learn actions and dances as tunes emerged out of the rhythm of the words. Many of the traditional European nursery rhymes may have been our first history lessons, like the link we were taught between *Ring a Ring o'Roses* and the Great Plague or *London Bridge* and the Fire of London.

There are plenty of collections available (and a lot of background material is available on the web) and using these could be a comfortable starting point for your first session. As part of an oral tradition they also provide an obvious bridge to using lullabies from other cultures.

Practising reading aloud

If you have chosen a specific theme for the session now is the time to start using the materials you have collected for people to practise reading aloud. Use similar exercises to those in *How to Enjoy Reading Aloud to Young Children* so that when your participants use the booklet at home they are familiar with the ideas.

Alternatively you may want to work through the *Enjoy Reading Aloud* booklet itself to familiarise everybody with how it works. If you get hold of some of the books from which the extracts come you can then extend the exercises.

A good example text to start with is from a book called **Roar** by Margaret Mayo and Alex Ayliffe. It is not in the parent booklet but can be used to demonstrate and elaborate on many of the animal noises talked about on page 6 of *How to Enjoy Reading Aloud to Young Children*.

Bold lions love roar, roar, roaring,
While cubs play – racing, chasing,
Scrambling over lionesses and oops! – tumbling.
So roar, bold lions, roar!
Fierce tigers love prow, prow, prowling,
Through the jungle slowly slinking,
Softly creeping, no ... grr... growling.
So prow, fierce tigers, prow!
Cheeky monkeys love swing, swing, swinging,
Hanging, dangling, tightly clinging,
Treetop scampering, calling and screaming.
So swing, cheeky monkeys, swing!

After the session

Send each participant home with a copy of *How to Enjoy Reading Aloud to Young Children* as a 'refresher'. It will also help if you furnish them with some 'real' books.

How about setting up a 'book exchange' either from your own collection or in partnership with your local library.

Evaluating and building on the session

You should now see a growth in the children's own enjoyment of reading, their behaviour and the use of books in the home environment.

To give your evaluation substance keep a record of books in / out, and of books read during the day. Make the checking process as lighthearted and fun as you can: creating bookmarks; using personalized, illustrated cards; collecting stickers; offering children opportunities to re-tell in their own words the stories they've been read.

Keep up the momentum by refreshing your book collection on a regular basis, updating your displays linked to books and keep promoting the taking home of books.

Once you've run one successful session then look for a new theme and a different time to run another. That way you can involve more parents and spread the word about enjoying reading aloud.

Useful sources

Bookstart, initiated by Booktrust in 1992, is the first national books for babies programme in the world. www.booktrust.org.uk and www.bookstart.co.uk. See also **Booktime** – www.booktime.pearson.com

National Literacy Trust, host source for a wide range of free resources and information including Reading Connects, Talk to Your Baby, National Reading Campaign, Reading Champions: www.literacytrust.org.uk Tel: 020 7587 1842 or contact them at: National Literacy Trust, 68 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL

Reading is Fundamental: www.rif.org

Storysack Ltd: a company offering commercially produced story sacks for sale, as well as tips on how to use the sacks. Visit www.story_sack.com

Teaching Expressive Speech by Edmund Pegge with CD, available from Claire Publications. ISBN: 978-1-904572-34-3

These are the books used in ***How to Enjoy Reading Aloud to Young Children***

Anansi and the Magic Stick by Eric A. Kimmel and Janet Stevens,
published by Holiday House, ISBN: 978-0823417636

Bumpus Jumpus Dinosaurumpus by Tony Mitton and Guy Parker-Rees,
published by Orchard Books, ISBN: 978-1841212944

Frog and the Birdsong by Max Velthuijs,
published by Andersen Press, ISBN: 978-0862649081

Guess How Much I Love You by Sam McBratney and Anita Jeram,
published by Walker Books, ISBN: 978-0744532241

It's So Unfair! by Pat Thomson and Jonathan Allen,
published by Andersen Press, ISBN: 978-1842705940

My Name is Mr Fox by Shen Roddie and Henning Löhlein,
published by Macmillan Children's Books, ISBN: 978-1405022095

Pingu the Chef by Sibylle Von Flue and BBC Children's Books,
published by Penguin Character Books, ISBN: 978-0563403500

Rabbit's Nap by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler,
published by Macmillan Children's Books, ISBN: 978-0333987384

Rama's Return by Lisa Bruce and Katja Bandlow,
published by Red Fox, ISBN: 978-0099439394

Roar! by Margaret Mayo and Alex Ayliffe,
published by Orchard Books, ISBN: 978-1846164880

Slinky Malinki by Lynley Dodd,
published by Puffin Books, ISBN: 978-0140544398

The Big Concrete Lorry by Shirley Hughes,
published by Walker Books ISBN: 978-0744563788

The Football Machine by David Bedford and Keith Brumpton,
published by Little Hare, ISBN: 978-1877003349

The Green Ship by Quentin Blake,
published by Red Fox, ISBN: 978-0099253327

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle,
published by Puffin Books, ISBN: 978-0140569322

This Is The Bear and the Scary Night by Sarah Hayes and Helen Craig,
published by Walker Books, ISBN: 978-0744594829

Thomas the Tank Engine by The Rev W Awdry,
published by Egmont Books Ltd, ISBN: 978-1405220002

We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury,
published by Walker Books, ISBN: 978-0744523232

What Makes Me Happy by Catherine and Laurence Anholt,
published by Walker Books, ISBN: 978-1406303469

Where The Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak,
published by Red Fox, ISBN 978-0099408390