

A quote from the famous Australian children's book author, Mem Fox

*The more expressively we read, the more fantastic the experience will be. The more our kids love books, the more they'll pretend to read them, and the more they pretend to read, the more quickly they'll learn to read. So reading aloud is not quite enough—we need to read aloud well.*

Ten read-aloud commandments - Mem Fox's Ten Read Aloud Commandments. ([www.memfox.com](http://www.memfox.com))



1. Spend at least ten wildly happy minutes *every single day* reading aloud.
2. Read at least three stories a day: it may be the same story three times. Children need to hear a thousand stories before they can begin to learn to read.
3. Read aloud with animation. Listen to your own voice and don't be dull, or flat, or boring. Hang loose and be loud, have fun and laugh a lot.
4. Read with joy and enjoyment: real enjoyment for yourself and great joy for the listeners.
5. Read the stories that the kids love, over and over and over again, and always read in the same 'tune' for each book: i.e. with the same intonations on each page, each time.
6. Let children hear lots of language by talking to them constantly about the pictures, or anything else connected to the book; or sing any old song that you can remember; or say nursery rhymes in a bouncy way; or be noisy together doing clapping games.
7. Look for rhyme, rhythm or repetition in books for young children, and make sure the books are really short.
8. Play games with the things that you and the child can see on the page, such as letting kids finish rhymes, and finding the letters that start the child's name and yours, remembering that it's never work, it's always a fabulous game.
9. Never ever *teach* reading, or get tense around books.
10. Please read aloud every day, mums and dads, because you just love being with your child, not because it's the right thing to do.

## Reader's Theatre and Performance Poetry

Participation in Reader's Theatre provides an opportunity for children to increase their oral language skills. Readers' theatre provides an authentic purpose for reading. With this purpose, children are dedicated to working on expression and correct phrasing, as they want the audience to thoroughly enjoy their reading performance.

- 1) Give one script to each of the group members
- 2) If there are scripts left over then members of the group may need to read two roles.
- 3) If there are more group members than scripts then two people may read the same role.
- 4) First, read through the script silently. If there are unknown words, look them up in a dictionary.
- 5) Then, read through the script out loud. If you're a character, think about how that character would sound. Should you try a funny voice? How would the character feel about what's happening in the story? Can you speak as if you were feeling that?
- 6) Stand in a circle and do a practice reading.
- 7) Members of the group should read the highlighted text from their own script sheet in order to make a coherent story.
- 8) After the script has been read out loud once, members of the group will discuss how best to 'perform' to others. This discussion could include: reading fluently to be entertaining, creating different voices for each of the characters, using props (like clothing, wigs...)
- 9) The group may need two or three more practices before feeling confident to perform.

Remember to:

- Talk slowly. Speak each syllable clearly.
- Talk loud!
- Talk with feeling.
- Stand and sit straight. Keep your hands and feet still, if they're doing nothing useful!
- If you're moving around, face the audience as much as you can. When rehearsing, always think about where the audience will be.
- Characters, remember to *be* your character even when you're not speaking.

This is an excellent strategy to use at home to improve your child's oral fluency and confidence when reading out loud.

It is very easy to create your own Reader's Theatre. Simply select a book which is not too long and includes dialogue. Picture books are usually perfect for turning into Reader's Theatre scripts. Type the text out onto one sheet. Decide on how many characters or narrators you are going to have. Make that many copies of the text. Then you only need to highlight the relevant text for each of the characters/narrators and perform. It will be great fun for the whole family.