

## Why Reading Aloud is Important for All Aged Kids

Wintertime woes can be battled by a good nightly read aloud. Even if your child is able to read fluently by him or herself, research shows that parents (and teachers!) should keep reading aloud to kids well into their teens. Unfortunately, most of us don't. According to Scholastic's Kids and Families Reading Report (<http://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/key-findings.htm>), 59% of children, ages 0-5, are read aloud to 5-7 days a week. This number drops to 38% for kids aged 6-8; it drops again to 17% for kids aged 9 - 11. Looking for a New Year Resolution? Read aloud to *all* the children in your family every night- even to your teenagers! Why? Reading aloud . . .

### Challenges your child's 'listening' level

According to Jim Trelease, author of the [Read-Aloud Handbook](#), a child's reading level isn't on par with his listening level until the eighth grade. Trelease says that parents "can and should be reading seventh-grade books to fifth-grade kids." Kids are often capable of appreciating a more complex plot than the one in a story they can read to themselves.

### Increases your child's vocabulary

[Researchers have found](#) that books contain more sophisticated language than children are likely to hear in spoken language. Books, furthermore, contain 50 percent more rare words than prime-time television shows or a typical college-level conversation between students. Learn new words together and model how to use the context to figure out unknown words.

### Increases the time spent off a screen and with family

This one speaks for itself. We know that it may be difficult to squeeze in a nightly read - with the sports and other activities our kids do. Try getting to bed 10 minutes earlier, shutting the TV or screen off 10 minutes earlier, and read a chapter. Tweens need this closeness - even if they pretend otherwise! Increased time reading with the family can also help instill a love of reading.

### Helps your child explore big ideas

Reading and discussing issues in a book that you are sharing gives parents and kids a no-judgement, no stress opportunity to talk about those issues in the context of the characters and the story as well as make connections to real-world social issues. Trelease said, "When you talk about a book together, it's not a lecture, it's more like a coach looking at a film with his players, going over the plays to find out what went right and what went wrong." Reading aloud can foster discussion about social issues, beliefs and feelings.

My daughter is a third grader and my husband and I read to her every night. We have been reading chapter books to her since the age of 3 - beginning with the *Magic Tree House* series, and moving on to the *Rainbow Fairies* series. Predictable series with memorable characters will often keep the youngest reader's attention - even without illustrations. We have enjoyed *The Boxcar Children*, *Wizard of Oz*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. We pick out books from the library together and sometimes I choose a book that I know will help build my daughter's background knowledge or that it will introduce her to a complex issue. Some of those titles include: *Clayton Byrd Goes Underground*, *Love That Dog*, *Inside Out and Back Again*, and *Walk to Moons*.

What are we reading now? The fifth book in the *Harry Potter* series. This one may take us until the summer to finish!

For more information about the benefits of reading aloud - check out these resources:

- <https://www.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/e00522/chapter2.pdf>
- <http://www.trelease-on-reading.com/>
- <http://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/reading-aloud.htm>