Techniques to Enhance the Read-Aloud Experience

Techniques to help you make the most of your read-aloud experience:

➤ Try to establish a regular time for reading aloud.
➤ Find a quiet, comfortable place. With young children, snuggling together while reading is important.
➤ Remove background distractions so that the reading experience takes precedence.
➤ Select a book that you like (and have previewed) and that you think the child will like too.
➤ Point out the cover illustration and the names of the book's author and illustrator.
➤ Have fun bringing the characters and events to life. Read with expression.
➤ Read slowly enough for children to take in the words and look at the pictures.
➤ Stop during the reading to invite children to complete a predictable phrase or sentence, to guess what might happen next, or to think about how they themselves might react in a similar situation.
➤ Encourage children to ask questions.
➤ Watch the children's body language; children may need to take a break or to end the session early. Try to determine whether the child just needs to fidget or whether the child finds the story boring.
➤ Talk about the book afterward. Be sure to elicit the child's reaction.
➤ If a frequently read book is read aloud, ask the child to retell the story in his or her own words.

Additional tips for reading with expression:

➤ Reading aloud is not enough—you need to read aloud well.
➤ As you read the story, remain aware of your body position, your eyes and their expression, your eye contact with the child, your vocal variety, and your general facial animation.
If you read a story without allowing its emotional value to show through your eyes, you’re wasting a prime asset.

In choosing a reading voice, don't go too far. Avoid using a cutesy, sugary, patronizing voice. Try to never talk down to children.

You can do at least seven things with your voice to keep children engaged during read-alouds. Six of these seven vocal gymnastics are contrasts: loud and soft, fast and slow, and high and low. And you can p-a-u-s-e. The words on the page will tell you which to choose. You don't need speech training.

The way you speak your first line should be sensational.

If anything could be more important than the first line of a story, it's the last line. Drag out the last line; the more slowly you say it, the more satisfied your listeners will be.