

How to read aloud without being boring

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By Jade Joddle

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Today I want to talk to you about reading aloud in front of other people. Because I notice a lot of people get nervous when they need to read in front of people.

They start to stutter, or their voice completely changes and they do the boring voice, reading-aloud voice. So this video is my attempt to get people to bring some feeling into it when they're reading. Because we could all just be sitting there reading it for ourselves. We don't need you to read. The reason we want you to read is so that you can bring a bit of life to this text for us.

The first step to making your reading more interesting is to own that space when you're reading aloud in front of other people. I haven't always been confident when reading aloud in front of other people. Even when I was at university, I still remember being self-conscious about it, because a lot of the time we'd be

reading quite old, hard-to-read texts. So there'd be words that were really long or complicated in them, or just old-fashioned style of speaking. So not the easiest thing to read aloud in front of other people. But I noticed when I just changed my attitude to reading, and decided just to enjoy it rather than be "Oh!" apprehensive; and that did make my reading in front of people go a lot more smoothly and be more enjoyable for me, really.

Here's where a lot of people go wrong when they're reading aloud: they don't manage their breath. So they find themselves reading something and it's like, "Oh no! I need to breathe!" So they interrupt the flow of the text just by taking a random breath anywhere. Now this is why punctuation is your friend. And if you're doing what I do, which is: scanning ahead a little bit to see what's coming, you want to know where are the commas; where are the full stops; where are the exclamation marks; where are the question marks—so that you know where you can take your breath. As long as you've always got enough breath to get to the end of the sentence, the end of the paragraph even, that's going to help everybody who's listening to understand you. When you pause, they're going to have that little moment of time just to process what you're saying.

Another thing to make your reading come alive is to make your words dance.

That means: use your voice in an entertaining, playful way. It might mean putting a much more of a stress on a particular word. It might mean allowing a character to speak in a voice that's not your own—just bring in a little accent when you're doing a character. Do what you can with your voice to vary the way that it sounds.

When we're reading, if you're reading a couple of paragraphs, for example, not every sentence in those paragraphs is of equal importance. So one thing you can do is read more quickly where it's not important. Let's say for example it's descriptive—it's describing how the room looked. When you're reading that bit, you can read more quickly, because it's not really important that we remember this. But when you get to introducing a character, or there's a bit of dialogue, that where you might slow down, just so people have got time to take in this information there. But you don't want to fill up time and space by saying everything really clearly and really slowly where it's not important. We've got to get on with this; we've got to read this big, heavy book, so let's go, let's move!

When you're reading—it happens to all of us at times that there's a word there, and we're like, "Ah, don't know how to say it!" So it could be somebody's name, a

foreign name, that you've not heard before, or it could just be a long, complicated word. And you see it coming up ahead, and that's when you start to get nervous.

What you should do in this situation is just give it your best shot. Just say the word how you think it's pronounced. You don't have to do the self-conscious...slow down...and then...say the word, in a sort of question-mark way: "Is this how I say this complicated word?" Just give it your best shot; and if you said it really wrong, really terrible, then somebody will interject.

But personally, I don't think it's important if you mispronounce a couple of words.

The most important thing is that you are reading! And this might be in a classroom situation, where you've just been asked to read, you've never seen the text before in your life. So, no problem—nobody's going to think that you're dumb because you didn't say a word properly.

Let me say here that there are different kinds of reading aloud. Let's say, for example, you know that you have a set piece to read in front of people; this could be a poem, or something like that. Your delivery of that poem will get better the more you practise. Because you'll know: Where am I going to pause, where am I

going to take my breaths, and you'll know—you'll just get really close to that piece of writing by reading aloud and practising a lot.

But that kind of practice is not going to help you so much in the spontaneous, needing to read in front of people kind of way. What's going to help you with that way is just to do practice reading aloud with anything. So this could be just when you're at home, you're reading your favourite book; reading your favourite book—just reading. You're at home and you're reading...reading a science textbook. Just have practice reading aloud. And from that, that's going to give you more confidence when you are called upon in that spontaneous situation where you have to read.

What we want to do, overall, is just bring some life to it. Don't be that person who's making everybody fall asleep with their boring voice. Manage your breath; make sure that you're breathing well, and you'll get through it. And everyone will enjoy you reading in the classroom or wherever you happen to be.

So what I want to do now is tell you about the free audio book that you can get from Audible. What you can do now is just click that link, and that will take you to Audible, where you can choose any one of their books on there, get that one

free. I'm recommending: Quiet, by Susan Cain, because I've already listened to that one and it was awesome!

So come back and see me soon. And until then: Bye!

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