

To Read to or Be Read to?



The prevailing thought among early childhood educators is that reading aloud to children who can read is considered the best way to prepare a child to learn to read.

The International Literacy Foundation wrote in 2019: “Read aloud to students regularly, even in secondary classrooms...Invite other adults to be read-aloud guests in your classrooms.”

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF®), a private philanthropy based in Baltimore devoted to developing a brighter future for millions of children and young people with respect to their educational...outcomes, wrote on April 12, 2018, that “When it comes to supporting literary development in young kids, the advice to parents is clear: Crack open a book — daily — and read aloud to your child.”

Latoya Crockton, in fulfilling the requirements for the degree M.S Literacy Education at the School of Arts and Sciences St. John Fisher College in 2010, wrote “Reading aloud to children in fourth and fifth grade, both in the home and in the classroom, is a practice that has been recommended for decades (Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000). Reading aloud [to children] has been integral to reading instruction in the United States since colonial times (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). It was a goal for classroom instruction.”

Further, “Teachers should continue to read to their students throughout the school year, but after students reach a certain grade, teachers tend to read aloud less and less every day. What teachers don’t realize is that they are doing a disservice to their students in more ways than one.”

According to the Balanced Literacy Handbook, read aloud can be defined as a component in which the teacher reads a selection aloud to students, often as a whole group activity.

When they eliminated having children reading aloud, it saved children the embarrassment of struggling with the pronunciation of words that were unfamiliar to them.”

Teachers in San Diego and California schools are required to read aloud to their students every day. (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey 2004)

On the contrary, having children read aloud, instead of being read to, is critical to good writing as well as what they learn.

Developing children to read confidently aloud from an early age benefits them later in life.



It is not just for confident readers either. It significantly helps struggling readers too. When reading aloud regularly, children improve their accuracy and word recognition.

It not only helps children comprehend what they are reading but allows them to listen to their voice. According to shareechapman.com, “Hearing your voice will assist you in identifying your unique writing voice.”

Melissa Gouty, a freelance writer and copy writer and creator of over 500 published pieces for magazines and online publications, wrote in Literaturelust.com:

“My knees were shaking. My voice cracked. I was in first grade and Mrs. Day asked me to read a book about farm animals out loud to the class. I wasn’t sure why they asked me to do that since it wasn’t something they usually required of kids, but I figured it was because I acted out the sounds the animals made, saying “MOOOOOOO” in the deepest, most bovine voice a scrawny six-year-old could muster whenever the cow talked.

Looking back, I think they wanted to hear a young child read with passionate expression. Don’t get me wrong. I was an ordinary kid, not a genius.

Now I know that that reading out loud is a talent not everyone has. It’s not a skill that we talk about much, and we probably don’t nurture and encourage reading out loud in many of our schools. But we should. Reading out loud has so many benefits, not just for young kids learning the language, but for adults of every age and at every stage of life.”

Words are meant to be heard. Reading aloud is a beneficial activity.

In Indian River County, FL., a newly formed group called The Young Journalist, with 115 third, fourth and fifth grade students, emphasizes having children read aloud as a fundamental component of the classes. By reading aloud students sound out words they may skip over if reading to themselves or will not know how to identify and pronounce if they are read to.

Contrary to the view that reading out loud “saves children the embarrassment of struggling with the pronunciation of words that were unfamiliar to them,” students in The Young Journalist Program work in a friendly environment where if one is unable to pronounce a word, other students help him or her and discuss it. The next time that student gets to that word he/she is much better able to pronounce and understand it.

Over time, it has been demonstrated that a struggling student reading aloud becomes much more adept at reading aloud.

Here, are some advantages to a student reading aloud as opposed to being read to.

When you are reading aloud you are sounding out words, detecting syllables and establishing a visual connection to the word. It improves your spelling.

It is an exercise you can do to improve your own writing, by knowing more words. It leads to greater confidence in public speaking.



Reading aloud improves diction and expression, which will then transfer into a speaking and writing voice.

By forming words and saying them aloud a student increases their ability to remember them. (When you sing songs, you're more likely to remember the words than if you just listen to them.)

Reading aloud improves your comprehension because it sharpens your focus and eliminates distractions. Your mind is concentrating on both the pronunciation of the words and their meaning when you're reading aloud.

It strengthens emotional bonds between students when other students help you pronounce words.

According to a Bbc.com article by Sophie Hardach, Colin MacLeod, a psychologist at the University of Waterloo in Canada, has extensively researched the impact of reading aloud on memory. He and his collaborators have shown that people consistently remember words and texts better if they read them aloud than if they read them silently. This memory-boosting effect of reading aloud is particularly strong in children, but it works for older people, too. "It's beneficial throughout the age range," he says.

MacLeod has named this phenomenon the "production effect". It means that producing written words – that's to say, reading them out loud – improves our memory of them.

The production effect has been replicated in numerous studies spanning more than a decade. In one study in Australia, a group of seven-to-10-year-olds were presented with a list of words and asked to read some silently, and others aloud. Afterwards, they correctly recognized 87% of the words they'd read aloud, but only 70% of the silent ones.