

ing bed-time, answer the question patiently. There is no time limit for reading a book, but there is a time limit on a child's inquisitiveness. Foster that curiosity with patient answers—then resume your reading. Classroom questions, however, need to be held until the end. With twenty children all de-



iding to ask questions to impress the teacher, you might never reach the end of the book.

11. **Don't** impose interpretations of a story upon your audience. A story can be just plain enjoyable, no reason necessary, and still give you plenty to talk about. The highest literacy gains occur with children who have access to discussions following a read-aloud.
12. **Don't** try to compete with television. If you say, "Which do you want, a story or TV?" they will usually choose the latter. That's like saying to a nine-year-old, "Which do you want, vegetables or an ice cream cone?" Since you are the adult, it should be your decision. "The television goes off at eight-thirty in this house. If you want a story before bed, that's fine. If not, that's fine, too. But no television after eight-thirty." Don't let books appear to be responsible for de-



*Don't make  
the books into the bad guys!*

priving the children of viewing time. The research more than supports limits on TV or computer gaming among children: Children with the most screen-time have consistently lower school scores.



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This is a companion brochure to *Thirty DO's to Remember When Reading Aloud* by Jim Trelease. Both are found in *The Read-Aloud Handbook* (Penguin).

For more details on the material contained here, see Jim Trelease's Web site: [www.trelease-on-reading.com](http://www.trelease-on-reading.com). All brochure material is based on his books, films, and lectures.

Nonprofit groups working with parent education and teacher training can find a list of these free downloadable materials at:  
[www.trelease-on-reading.com/downloads.html](http://www.trelease-on-reading.com/downloads.html).

# A DOZEN DON'TS TO REMEMBER WHEN READING ALOUD

BY JIM TRELEASE

Author of the New York Times Bestseller  
*The Read-Aloud Handbook*

Tips for parents, educators, and librarians  
on common pitfalls when reading aloud.

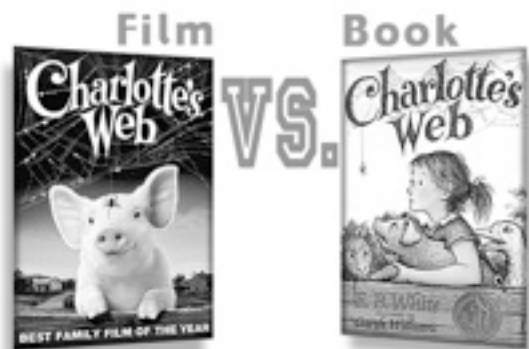


1. **Don't** read stories that you don't enjoy yourself. Your dislike will show in the reading, and that defeats your purpose.
2. **Don't** continue reading a book once it is obvious that it was a poor choice. Admit the mistake and choose another. Make sure, however, that you've given the book a fair chance to get rolling; some novels, like *Tuck Everlasting*, start slower than others. (You can avoid the problem by prereading at least part of the book yourself.)
3. **Don't** feel, as a teacher, that you must tie every book to class work. Don't confine the broad spectrum of literature to the narrow limits of the curriculum. Would you want everything



you did all day tied to a sermon? The object is to create a *life-time* reader, not a *school-time* reader. That goal will never be reached if a student thinks reading is always associated with work or sweat.

4. **Don't** overwhelm your listener. Consider the intellectual, social, and emotional level of your audience in making a read-aloud selection. Never read above a child's emotional level.
5. **Don't** select a book that many of the children already have seen on TV or the cinema. Once a novel's plot is known, much of their interest is lost. You can, however, read a book and



view the video *afterward*. That's a good way for children to see how much more can be portrayed in print than on film. *What was left out? Why? How long would the movie have to be to include everything in the book?*

6. **In** choosing novels for reading aloud, avoid books that are heavy with dialogue; they are too difficult for reading aloud and listening. All those indented paragraphs and quotations make for easy silent reading because the reader can see the quotations marks and knows it's a new voice, a different person speaking—but the listener can't. And if the writer fails to include a nota-

tion at the end of the dialogue, like "said Mrs. Murphy," the audience has no idea who said what.

7. **Don't** be fooled by awards. Just because a book won an award doesn't guarantee that it will make a good read-aloud. In most cases, a literary award is given for the quality of the writing or the illustrations, not for its read-aloud qualities.
8. **Don't** start reading if you are not going to have enough time to do it justice. Having to stop after one or two pages only serves to frustrate, rather than stimulate, the child's interest in reading the book.
9. **Don't** get too comfortable while reading. A reclining or slouching position is most apt to bring on drowsiness. A reclining position sends an immediate message to the heart: slow down. With less blood being pumped, less oxygen reaches the brain—thus drowsiness. This doesn't happen to everyone but it does to many. Keep your feet on the floor.
10. **Don't** be unnerved by questions during the reading, particularly from very young children in your own family. If the question is obviously not for the purpose of distracting or postpon-

