


GUIDELINES for Oral Reading



CHRISTIAN LIGHT
EDUCATION

 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

-Nehemiah 8:8

Introduction

Training students in oral reading skills is important. Though they learn much through silent reading, a good oral reading program will help students develop competence and confidence, equipping them to fill useful roles in their homes, in the church, and in society. This article will cover the following topics:

- » Purposes of Oral Reading
- » Skills
- » Selection of Material
- » Preparation
- » Reading Orally
- » Discussion
- » Evaluation
- » Overcoming Difficulties
- » Guidelines for Oral Reading
- » Conclusion

Purposes of Oral Reading

- » To provide practice in various oral reading skills.
- » To provide opportunities for relating to an audience by sharing information or enjoyment with others.
- » To develop confidence and poise in front of others by connecting with an audience.
- » To train students to effectively read the Bible, poetry, or varied types of prose.
- » To make reading enjoyable.
- » To build a child's sense of worth by contributing to others.
- » To check reading proficiency and diagnose reading difficulties.

- » To motivate students to greater achievement.
- » To improve students' communication skills.
- » To equip students for responsibilities in speaking and teaching.

Skills

An oral reading program should train students in the following areas:

Pronunciation: saying the correct sounds for each syllable of a word.

Enunciation: articulating words and syllables distinctly.

Inflection: adjusting the pitch or tone of voice to match the content and to convey variations of meaning.

Mood: expressing appropriate distinctions of feeling such as surprise, delight, dismay, fear, excitement, uncertainty, or accusation.

Stress: giving proper emphasis to words or syllables.

Style: reading in a natural manner that matches the content.

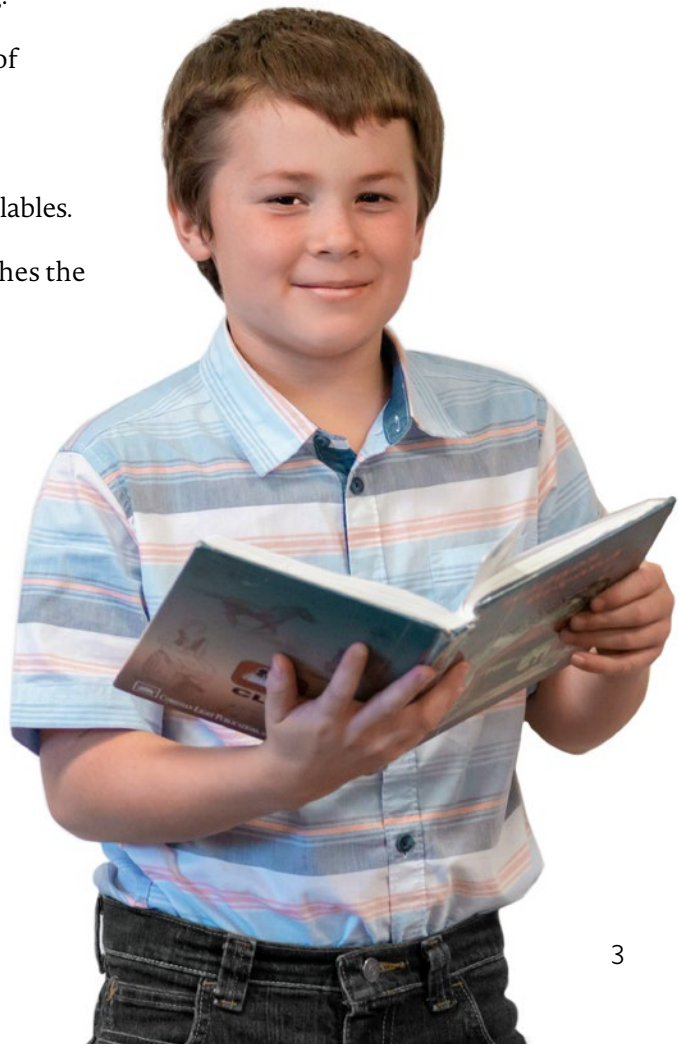
Voice quality: avoiding high-pitched, muffled, or nasal sounds.

Proper phrasing: pausing appropriately between segments of thought.

Observation of punctuation: pausing at commas, stopping at periods, using rising inflection at question marks, and exclaiming at exclamation points.

Volume: regulating loudness appropriate to the selection and audience.

Rate: varying speed appropriate to the selection.



 The teacher must plan to do more than simply listen to each student read a page.

Audience contact: facing the people, reading to them, and enjoying the selection with them.

Posture: standing erect without leaning, propping, or slouching; holding the book without obstructing the face.

Gestures: keeping motions natural and appropriate; avoiding exaggeration.

Appearance: being neatly groomed and having tidy clothes.

Breathing: breathing naturally, inhaling gently between phrases and sentences.

Mannerisms: avoiding distractions such as constantly clearing the throat, adjusting glasses, or shifting from one foot to another.

Poise: being relaxed and confident with a desire to benefit the audience.

Selection of Material

In addition to the regular reading lessons, the teacher should include enriching supplementary selections for oral reading. This may include prose, poetry, or Scripture selections. The material should be appropriate to the students' maturity level, interest, and ability. Students with a solid phonics foundation often enjoy the stimulus of content above their grade level, but the teacher should not require a student to read material aloud that is too difficult for him. This is inconsiderate of both him and his audience.

Preparation

A teacher who enjoys reading can share that joy by reading to students. His example serves both to motivate and to model good oral reading skills. To help students develop these skills, the teacher must plan to do more than simply listen to each student read a page.

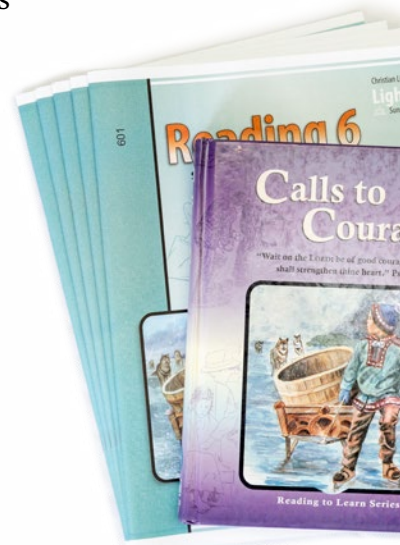
A major goal for the teacher is to stimulate interest and make oral reading sessions enjoyable. Introducing a story by merely referring to page 32 will hardly arouse interest or enthusiasm. A better way to stimulate students' interest and give them a purpose for reading is to introduce the main character of the story, identify his problem, and ask students how they think he resolved his problem.

Encouraging students to discover the *how, why, who, what, where, and when* in their silent reading gives them a purpose for reading and sets the stage for them to share their discoveries in the oral reading session.

Another way a teacher can stimulate even the most reluctant readers is by reading part of a story and stopping at a point of suspense. After inviting students to tell what they think will happen and why, the teacher finishes reading the story.

Oral reading enjoyment will depend largely on how meaningful the silent reading experience has been. Preparation for reading may include discussions centered around the following ideas.

- » Relating what is read to personal experience and previous information.
- » Recognizing the difference between types of material.
- » Distinguishing between the significant and the trivial.
- » Grasping the main idea.
- » Anticipating outcomes.
- » Observing sequential order.
- » Employing content to determine varied word meanings.
- » Noticing specific literary techniques.
- » Perceiving cause-and-effect relationships.
- » Drawing logical conclusions.



Not only should silent reading normally precede oral reading, but many students need to practice reading the selection aloud before class in order to share meaningfully with an audience.

It may be helpful to include students in setting up standards for oral reading based on the items mentioned in the Skills section. Inviting ideas from students stimulates their thinking and helps them better observe the standards when they read. Eliciting a contribution from each student prevents assertive students from monopolizing and gives hesitant students valuable experience.

Evaluating students based on these standards can motivate them to participate well.


Reading Orally

The actual reading should be a pleasant and shared experience without tension or embarrassment for anyone. Because skills are often developed indirectly or as a by-product of effort, the teacher should focus more on the content of a selection rather than on the skills. This will generate more interest and result in more meaningful student participation.

The teacher can prepare students for personal involvement by giving instructions about the selection. Occasionally calling attention to standards for oral reading will remind students of the need for quality participation.

To ensure that students remain alert and involved, the teacher might call on them at random to read rather than reading around the circle. Also, as students are reading a selection, the teacher can prepare them for what follows by giving brief explanations or by asking questions. However, to keep interruptions from dampening students' interest, the teacher should reserve most of the comments for the discussion period after the reading.

Reading specialists differ as to the value of each student following along in his own copy while one reads aloud. Consider the value of each approach.

 Remind students of the need for quality participation.

Advantages of students not following along in their own copies.

- » The reader faces a true audience situation. Since listeners cannot see the words being read, the reader should feel a greater responsibility to read clearly and meaningfully. The reader can also gain confidence from the rapt attention of the listeners.
- » The slow student is not confused by wrong auditory and visual impressions as he might be if he lags several words behind the reader.
- » The able reader does not need to slacken his pace to match that of a slow reader.
- » Listeners feel a greater responsibility to listen carefully.
- » The slow student is not threatened by other students observing his mistakes.

Advantages of students following along in their own copies.

- » Students benefit from hearing and seeing simultaneously.
- » Students learn pronunciation, inflection, phrasing, and observation of punctuation from the reader.
- » Students learn the discipline of paying attention, especially if they know the teacher might call on them to read next.
- » Students experience the story together in a fuller sense.
- » The slow reader must prepare carefully, knowing that others will follow his reading.

Both approaches have advantages. Alternating the approach from time to time allows students to reap the benefits of both.



Discussion

A teacher-directed discussion period following the oral reading provides opportunity for the following topics.

The teacher can

- » Compare students' discoveries with ideas shared earlier in preparation for reading.
- » Involve students in self-evaluation of their performance.
- » Check comprehension.
- » Highlight specific aspects of the selection.
- » Interpret the author's purpose.
- » Stimulate students' thinking.

The student can

- » Express opinions and test ideas.
- » Learn to consider other students' ideas.
- » Ask and answer questions.
- » Share discoveries.
- » Gain new insights.
- » Improve listening skills.

Evaluation

Oral reading classes do not all need to be diagnostic, but the teacher should be constantly alert to each student's difficulties and progress. A record of observations can help diagnose difficulties and determine remedial action. The teacher can record observations using a simple rubric.

It can be helpful to record a student's reading occasionally. Listening to the recording later helps the teacher concentrate on evaluation. The teacher should consider whether to have the


entire group listen to the recording, to have only the student listen to his own reading, or to restrict listening to the teacher's evaluation. By listening to a recording of their own reading, students can become aware of their weaknesses and work to improve their reading.

ORAL READING CHECKLIST	1 = needs much improvement
Student _____	2 = fair
Date _____	3 = good
Selected Material _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pronunciation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Enunciation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Smoothness, with proper phrasing; observes punctuation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Reads without missing, adding, or hesitating on words	
<input type="checkbox"/> Speed appropriate to the selection	
<input type="checkbox"/> Volume appropriate to the audience	
<input type="checkbox"/> Engages audience; appropriate eye contact	
<input type="checkbox"/> Poise: relaxed and confident	
<input type="checkbox"/> Reads with expression	

Overcoming Difficulties

Despite the best efforts, the teacher will need to overcome difficulties. These are suggestions that may help avoid or correct those difficulties.

- » Naturally shy children may gain confidence by participating in choral reading occasionally.
- » Those who read word-by-word can often learn to read phrases smoothly by practicing phrase-card drills and by looking at the meaning of a phrase as a whole.

 Good
expression
in oral
reading is
taught by
example.

- » Because students' reading levels vary, a certain amount of grouping is inevitable. The teacher should take care not to tire the able student with the laborious efforts of the struggling slow learner or to isolate the struggling learner from listening to able readers. One solution to this might be to have a student read in one group but listen in another.
- » Having listeners call attention to mistakes the reader makes may encourage listeners to follow closely. But they may find it difficult to concentrate on the positive aspects of the presentation and instead develop a critical or superior attitude. This also tends to place undue pressure on the reader.
- » When a student hesitates at a word, the teacher can occasionally help him sound out the word, but too many corrections distract the audience. It may be better to quietly supply the word but also require the student to pronounce the word correctly before going on. The teacher should give remedial work in phonics later.
- » A thorough understanding of phonics sounds and rules usually prevents reading problems, including guessing. The teacher should not permit guessing since it handicaps a reader and results in uncertainty and confusion. To help overcome guessing, the teacher should teach students to blend letters and sound out words, teach the rules where they apply, and give plenty of drill for reinforcement. For the average student, this will help develop understanding and restore confidence.
- » Remedial work in a group setting may help those with similar problems, but individual help may also be needed. Helping a student identify and tackle his problems gives him confidence and security.

Guidelines for Oral Reading

Students in first grade need much oral reading practice and should normally read all their reading lessons orally after having

read them silently. Good expression in oral reading is taught by example and by calling attention to the components of effective reading. Depending on grade level and reading ability, teachers should encourage students to do the following.

- » Stand erectly, facing the audience.
- » Read the title of the selection.
- » Read audibly and distinctly.
- » Regulate volume according to the selection.
- » Pronounce words and syllables distinctly.
- » Modulate tone of voice to match content such as a change in conversation.
- » Express moods such as surprise, dismay, or delight.
- » Give proper emphasis to words or syllables.
- » Observe punctuation marks.
- » Read at a rate appropriate to the selection.
- » Read so that others will enjoy listening.

After first grade, oral reading practice should continue, particularly in the lower levels, with the percentage of time allotted for it gradually diminishing. Beyond first grade, consider scheduling oral reading sessions as a group activity several times a week. Here are some suggestions to include during oral reading time.



- » A brief invitation to read aloud the story assigned earlier for silent reading.
- » A brief review of standards for oral reading.
- » Reading under step-by-step teacher direction.
- » Discussion.
- » Introducing a new selection.
- » Assigning a new selection to be read outside of class.

Conclusion

Silent reading skills are foundational to oral reading, but the two skills are interdependent: improving one helps improve the other. Though this treatment of oral reading is by no means exhaustive, it can serve as a guide in developing both a quality oral reading program and competent, confident readers.



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