



## RAR 76 – How to Make Reading Aloud the Best Part of the Day

**Sarah:** You're listening to the Read-Aloud Revival podcast. This is the podcast that helps you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.

Hello, hello, Sarah Mackenzie here. You've got episode 76 of the Read-Aloud Revival, so happy you're here. Hey, before we get started with today, I want to let you know a timely reminder— if you're listening to this when it goes live, you don't want to miss it. I know it's hard to connect with your kids in this busy, noisy world, but sharing books with our kids gives us a chance to be fully present, and as a homeschool mom of six, I know that when life feels crazy spending a few minutes reading to my kids, even to the kids that can read to themselves, maybe especially to the kids that can read to themselves, is the best and most important thing I do all day. It's easier than we might think and in Read-Aloud Revival premium membership we help parents connect with their kids in three simple steps: (1) by equipping themselves with Master Classes, (2) by inspiring their kids with front row seats at exclusive online Author Access Events with today's best authors and illustrators, and (3) by connecting with other parents who are doing the same thing. We only open premium membership twice a year for a week each time, so it's a really small window and I don't want you to miss out on it. The doors actually close to this registration Tuesday, October 17, 2017, at 9:00pm PST. And we won't open again until the spring of 2018. I don't want you to miss out on your chance. You can see all the awesome Master Classes that we have available in premium membership, all the Author Access events that you have instant

access to, as well as the ones that are coming up live in the next year, and all the other resources there that will help you make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books. Don't miss out on this chance to join, go to [RARmembership.com](http://RARmembership.com) to get in.

## 2:33 When Reading Aloud Isn't Magical ...

So, what do we do if reading aloud with our kids is not quite what we envisioned it would be? Maybe they're a bit less enthusiastic than we thought they'd be, or maybe the whole thing just isn't going as well as we had hoped. I'll tell you what, if you're scrolling Instagram or hopping around on Facebook and you see some picture of another lady who's kids are pouring over a book with rapt attention, you may get a little discouraged, or maybe you thought you'd be sitting there on the hearth reading something amazing like *The Wind in the Willows* or *The Secret Garden* while your kids were listening attentively at your feet. I don't know. It just doesn't look quite like you envisioned, right? Maybe it doesn't look as peaceful, maybe you're starting to wonder does this even count, does this even matter, this is crazy, my read-aloud time is chaos, and this is not pleasant. Every time you gather the kids and work up the gumption to start reading aloud things start to fall apart. The toddler pitches a fit, or maybe your teenager does. The kids are wiggling and noisy, and they keep interrupting you, nobody can keep their toes on their own sofa cushion, kids are in a leg war and you can't hear yourself read over the din. To make matters worse, as much as you try, you can't even keep your eyes open through an entire chapter. Let me tell you, sister, I have been there! I believe in the power of reading aloud. I know



that it helps develop my kids' sense of empathy and compassion for others, that it prepares them for academic success better than just about anything else, that it's lifelong bonding action, but you know what? Some days it just feels blasted impossible and not pleasant. So, how do we start to enjoy reading aloud? How do we make that time of our day our favorite part of the day? If you'd like to make read-aloud time more delightful and successful in your home that things aren't going as smoothly as you'd like, you're in the right place. On today's podcast we're going to talk about five ways to make reading aloud time more delightful and successful in your home.

## 4:40 Pick a Book YOU Love

The first thing you want to do is just make sure you're reading something you enjoy. I think a lot of times we put this pressure on ourselves that we need to read a classic, or at least something of high literary value. And I'll tell you, reading classics is a lovely thing to do. It's admirable in every way, right? Classics are nourishing for us, they're so good – I'm not devaluing classics, but let's work up to those, shall we? Get yourself a list of books that are likely to stoke the love of reading in your own kids. I have a whole book list of books that I think will do this. It's free. You can grab it at [ReadAloudRevival.com](http://ReadAloudRevival.com), pop your email into grab it. That read-aloud list will give you a whole bunch of ideas. But here's the thing, you've got to read-aloud books that you enjoy reading, even if it's not *Moby Dick*, goodness sakes, or *Call of the Wild* or even something like, *Wind in the Willows*, even if it seems something that seems a little bit light or fluffy, because here's what happens. Your enthusiasm and delight is passed along to your kids, your lack of enthusiasm and delight is also passed along to

your kids. Here's the other thing. When you don't enjoy the book, you're less likely to get to it every day. I know your day is crammed with all these other things that you need to do. If you're not enjoying reading you are not going to have a hard time finding something else that needs to be done instead of reading with your kids so you've got to be enjoying the book. You've got to give yourself permission to choose books that light you up. So, a good book list is invaluable. To find our Read-Aloud book list, again, at [ReadAloudRevival.com](http://ReadAloudRevival.com) and just don't put this pressure on yourself that just because you started a book means you have to finish it, or just because your super well educated, really bookish friend said she loved this one book and you've got to read it, too – no, that doesn't mean you have to love it. If you don't love it, ditch it and find something else. So, make sure whatever you're reading is enjoyable and lights you up. That's number one.

## 6:40 Keeps Your Kid's Busy!

Number two, keep your kid's hands busy. Look, if you're frustrated that your kids won't sit still during read-aloud time then I've got news for you. They don't need to. Your children may actually listen better when they're doing something with their hands. We've got an expert coming on to the Read-Aloud Revival podcast soon [episode 82] and he's going to tell us exactly this: that research shows that for many, many children they listen and concentrate better when they are moving. It's the way their brains are wired. So, let them play, give them something to do and see if it helps them focus their attention. It'll likely keep the normal sibling bickering at bay, at the very least, and we could all use a little of that, because if your kids are



bickering it's probably not a very enjoyable time of day, right? We did a whole episode on how to keep your kid's hands busy while you read-aloud and along with that episode we've got this whole printable list of ideas for what your kids from toddlers to teens can do while you read-aloud. It's all free, it's in episode 73. So, you want to go to [ReadAloudRevival.com/73](http://ReadAloudRevival.com/73), or if you're listening in your podcast app, after you're done listening to this episode, just scroll to find episode 73 so you can listen. You'll want to grab the printable list of ideas because it makes it so much more doable and simple in your home and you can get ideas for your kids and what they can do with their hands no matter what their age is. So, go to the Show Notes at [ReadAloudRevival.com](http://ReadAloudRevival.com), again that's episode 73.

### 8:08 Give Kids Warning

One thing that will help significantly is if you give your kids a few minutes of a heads up before read-aloud time. You want them to have a chance to gather whatever they'd like to work on. I've found it really helpful to keep a read-aloud shelf where my older kids can grab their favorite sketchpads and how to draw books and colored pencils and that kind of thing. They want to be able to grab their materials, or I should say, I want them to be able to grab their materials in a jiffy. And then that way we can just get right down to reading. But take the pressure off of having your kids sit there, eyeing you, lovingly, while you read-aloud a classic. Read something you love, let your kids do something with their hands. Hey, this is getting better all ready, right? I bet you can see how this is going to help your read-aloud time be a little more enjoyable than it was already. Alright, idea number three is to give the toddlers something to do. I'll tell you what, if you've got

toddlers in your house it is hard to read-aloud without losing your cool, right? Because toddlers do not understand that when you're at the climax of the story they cannot come over and insist that you get them a snack. In our house we've got several big kids and several little kids and saving some toys (things like, chunky puzzles, board books, or just some simple activities tucked away and they only come out during read-aloud time) saves you. Novelty pays off for the toddler set, so we want to capitalize on this idea of novelty. So, giving youngest kids in the family something he or she doesn't normally get that could buy you a good 10 minutes. So, if you just tuck away some chunky puzzles, some little – go to episode 73 and grab the printable and look at the list of things for toddlers to do and put together a little tote of activities that your toddler can do while you're reading aloud and only pull the tote out when you're reading aloud and I'll bet you find that you get a little bit more uninterrupted time. Even if you get 10 or 15 minutes, sister, that's all you need.

### 10:05 Read for 10 Minutes

Let's talk about that: reading for 10 minutes. This is idea number four. Only read for 10 minutes. Then stop, because I'll tell you what, if you're waiting until you have a 30 minute chunk of time to read-aloud to your kids you're probably not doing it very often, right? So, here's the secret and some of you are going to have a hard time swallowing this, but there is no law that says you have to finish a chapter. There's no law that says you have to finish the whole chapter. That's why God made bookmarks. So, read for 10 minutes and then stop. Put a bookmark or a post-it or whatever you have handy, shove it in there, and you'll know where to pick up the next day. If you



were to read 10 minutes every day over one year's time you would read 60 hours. That means if you read 10 minutes every other day that's 30. Thirty hours is a tremendous amount of reading aloud. You could read the entire *Chronicles of Narnia* in that amount of time, over 200 picture books in that amount of time. I mean, seriously, you could read a lot in that amount of time. So, read for just 10 minutes and stop. And the reason why, is you usually want to end your read-aloud time before everybody expires, before kids start getting too wiggly and fidgety and asking you when you're going to be done, before little kids start flying off the handle and you think, 'Oh my gosh, they're going to drive me crazy,' before your voice goes out, before you get too tired. So, read for less time and stop before you lose everybody and it will be a more enjoyable time of day. And the next day when you pull out read-aloud it will be that thing that they want to come back to instead of that 'oh, drudgery,' right? OK, so let's review what we've said so far. We've said make sure you're reading something you enjoy, let your kids do something with their hands and move around, give the toddlers and small kids something special to do they don't normally get, and then only read for a short amount of time, or at least that time is going to vary depending on your family, basically the essence there is stop before you start losing kids and before you start losing your cool. Remember that you only need 10 minutes every other day to read 30 hours a year and that is plenty. The last idea I want to give you today is for those of you who have a hard time staying awake while you read. I understand! So, there isn't a fix-all for this. Jim Weiss, who's this amazing story-teller at Great Hall Productions, he was very early on, on the Read-Aloud Revival, I think his episode numbers are 4 and 5. He came on twice and did two

amazing episodes for us. He told me that parents start falling asleep when they're reading aloud because they're so into the story they got lost in the story. But I honestly I think it's just because we're tired. I think it's just because I'm tired. So, here's the deal. It helps if I read-aloud earlier in the day. I actually try and read-aloud as early in the day as possible. Mostly, because I believe that reading aloud is the number one way I could spend my parental time and energy during the day, it's the absolute best thing I can do as the mother of my children for the day. So, I want to do it early because then I know if the rest of the day goes to pot we at least got to that most important thing, right? The other benefit of doing it earlier in the day is that you're less tired and you can do it with coffee in hand, and that helps. We all know we're supposed to read to our kids at bedtime, and we do actually read to our very young kids at bedtime, but you know what? I have a hunch that a tired mother did not make up that tradition. Who has the energy or the ability to stay awake after they've been with their children all day, to read-aloud at bedtime? It's a wonderful, wonderful tradition. If you do it, that's awesome. We do it with our young kids. But if you're not successful at reading at bedtime there's no law that says that's what you need to be doing. Find a better time of day. If I'm reading a novel to my kids before bed I can pretty much guarantee that I'm going to fall asleep so I've found that I'm able to stay awake much better earlier in the day, as in, well before lunch. Also, if you're having a hard time staying awake when you're reading aloud, don't make yourself too comfortable. I avoid our coziest, warmest couch at read-aloud time. I'm a gonneer on that thing. In fact, my kids, for awhile, when I would sit down there they'd go, "Mom, don't read on that



because you'll fall asleep!" So, yeah, that's a problem.

## 14: 22 Bringing it All Together

OK, so read what you love—read something that lights you up, even think back to your own childhood and think back to some book that lit you up and you loved reading. Maybe the first book that turned you into a reader or the first book where you really got lost in a book, and read that. I'll be you'll be surprised at how enjoyable that is. Let your kids hands be busy, let them color. Do puzzles. Knit. Draw. Sketch. Cut out collages. Play with legos. Let them do things with their hands so you're not feeling antsy and they're not feeling antsy while you're reading. Give those toddlers and small kids something special to do that they don't normally get to do so you're playing on the novelty concept there. Only read for 10 minutes, 15 minutes, or shorter than they're going to last, so always cut your reading time off before everybody's ready for it. And if you're having a hard time staying awake, try to read-aloud earlier in the day, make yourself less cozy. Remember, if you're only reading aloud for 10 or 15 minutes, that will help. If you're trying to read-aloud for 30 you might have a harder time. The key to being a read-aloud family is not making this bigger or harder or more complex than it needs to be. You just need to take a little bit of time. And by a little bit of time, I mean, even as short as 10 minutes every couple of days. Give the toddlers something to keep them busy, let your kids keep their hands busy, and dive into a story that you enjoy. It might not look like the read-aloud time of your dreams, but I bet you'll do it more often. And who knows, you might even find it's the best part of your day.

## 16:02 Let the Kids Speak

Now, it's time for Let the Kids Speak. This is my favorite part of the podcast where kids tell us about their favorite stories that have been read aloud to them.

**Child1:** My name is Belle. I am 10 years old. I'm from California. And my favorite book is *Heidi* because her best friend lives really far away and my best friend just moved away.

**Child2:** Hi, my name is Addison. I live in North Carolina. I am 9 years old. My favorite book is *100 Cupboards*. My favorite part in it is where Henry finds the wagon.

**Child3:** Hi, my name is Jacqueline and I am 9 years old and I live in Colorado, and my favorite book is *The Penderwicks*. It's by Jane Birdsall. And why I love it is because it really captivates your imagination. I love the beginning because they get to their cottage and it's a really pretty picture in your mind.

**Child4:** My name is Josie and I'm 6 years old and my favorite book is *Mustache Baby* because when she was born his family figured out that he had mustache. And I'm from Colorado.

**Child5:** [Sibling: your name?] Claire. [Sibling: how old are you?] I'm 3. [Sibling: what's your favorite book?] *Katy and the Big Snow*. [Sibling: what do you like about it?] The snow plow. [Sibling: is she cool?] Yes. [Sibling: bye.] Bye.

**Child6:** My name's Callie. I live on Staten Island, Pennsylvania PA. My favorite book to be read to is *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott.

**Child7:** [Mom: what's your name?] Zachary. [Mom: how old are you, Zachary?] 4. [Mom: and what is your favorite book?] *The Brass Band Robbery*. [Mom: *The Brass Band Robbery* by



John Patience. Where do you live, Zachary?] In Pennsylvania. [Mom: Pennsylvania.]

**Child8:** My name is Nathan. And I'm 9 years old. My favorite book my dad is reading to us is *Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien. I live in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.

**Child9:** My name is Henry and I'm 8 years old. I live in Minneapolis, Minnesota. And my favorite book is *Thoughts to Make Your Heart Sing*. I like it because how it speaks to you about God's love, and I also like the pictures.

**Child10:** Hi, my name is Anna. I am 11 years old. I live in Minneapolis, Minnesota. My favorite book is *The Secret Keepers* by Trenton Lee Stewart. I like this book because it has adventure. It is about a boy name Ruben. Ruben likes to hide and climb. My favorite part of the book is when Ruben gets trapped on top of a building and has to find out how to get down.

**Child11:** Hi, I am Thomas. I am 13 years old and I live in Minneapolis, Minnesota. My favorite book is *The Mysterious Benedict Society* by Trenton Lee Stewart. It is a series of four books focused on a group of a children and their adventure saving the world. Their adventures are very exciting and fun. The first adventure in the first book is to stop Mr. Benedict's evil twin from controlling the world, the mind-controlled device. My sister and I read the whole series aloud to each other.

**Sarah:** Awesome, thank you so much, kids. I love hearing messages from your kids. If they want to leave messages for the Read-Aloud Revival podcast, and tell us which books they love hearing read-aloud or love reading themselves, go to [ReadAloudRevival.com](http://ReadAloudRevival.com), scroll to the bottom of the page, and you'll see how easy it is for them to leave a message. Hey, don't forget,

Read-Aloud Revival membership closes Tuesday, October 17, 2017, at 9:00pm Pacific, and we won't be reopening until the spring. You don't want to miss out on the amazing things we have happening in premium membership. So, go to [RARmembership.com](http://RARmembership.com) to get in. Hey, until next time go make meaningful and lasting connections with your kids through books.