

Reader's Theater is a strategy for developing reading fluency. It combines reading practice and performing. Its goal is to enhance students' reading skills and confidence by having them practice reading with a purpose. Reader's Theater motivates reluctant readers and provides fluent readers the opportunity to explore genre and characterization.

Reader's Theater involves children in oral reading through reading parts in scripts. In using this strategy, readers do not need to memorize their part; they need only to reread it several times, thus developing their fluency skills. The best Reader's Theater scripts include lots of dialogue.

Steps for Reader's Theater

1. Choose text that:
 - is short.
 - is easy—it is important at the start that children do not have to think about how to read the words.
 - children have been read before, ideally more than once.
 - can be divided into parts (such as characters). There ideally are multiple parts that involve many readers. Start with ones that give more readers fewer words.
 - is fun to perform.
 - has lots of good dialogue.
2. Assign reading parts to each child. Provide each reader with a separate script, highlighting his or her part. Tip: put the scripts in a folder. Be sure to model each character's part and match roles to readers. Combine parts if there are too many and cut out scenes and characters that aren't important.
3. Ask children to read their scripts to themselves, and then orally for practice. They do not memorize their parts; they always read from their scripts. They may need time to work out tricky words and phrases. Practice a minimum of five times.
4. Have children read assigned parts to the audience. A stage is unnecessary. Children simply stand or sit in a semicircle. Perform a reader's theater script at least twice. The first time, children may be struggling with words and their meanings, and with making sense of the play. The second time, they'll be able to focus on enjoying the performance and their parts in it.