

Reading Out Loud for Yourself
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Reading has been around for as long as the written word, but did you know that for most of reading's history it was a pretty loud experience? Early decrees, laws, and letters included instructions to listen to them. That's right, not see or read, but listen! Many parents and grandparents of small children are aware of the benefits of regularly reading out loud to a child. It provides enormous benefits for the child's cognitive development, indicators of future school success, developing a lifelong love of reading and learning, and fosters better communication and bonds with the reader. However, reading out loud isn't just beneficial to the young or even to other people. Readers of all ages can benefit from this practice.

Before Bluetooth ear pieces normalized people seemingly talking to themselves, it was commonly frowned upon to be talking to oneself. Although on this point, I'm sure many of us have had a few conversations with ourselves for a variety of reasons. We'll put that aside for now because self-narration is another topic entirely, but I wanted to make the distinction that reading aloud for yourself is a completely different phenomenon. There are several specific benefits to reading out loud both for yourself and to other people, and it's all about the auditory experience.

When you read silently, your eyes are taking in visual symbols that represent sounds that convey meaning in the language you are reading. It's a direct eye to brain experience. Reading out loud changes this to a multi-sensory, bi-directional activity. The eye to brain still happens, but then you add the brain's directions for speech, the ears' auditory pickup of your voice, and your brain analyzing the text for cadence, syntax, emphasis, and emotion to include in the speech directions. If you are reading to someone, you can also add checking for visual and auditory cues from the audience related to attentiveness and emotional response. As you can see (or hear if you are choosing to read this out loud), your brain gets a much bigger workout from reading aloud. Not only that, but people tend to involve the rest of their body more when reading out loud as well. If that's all there were, then reading aloud would be beneficial. There's more to the story though.

A number of neurological and psychological studies done over more than a decade on everyone from first graders to octogenarians show that reading out loud has a significant memory boosting effect. Your ability to recall information you read out loud can be as much as 3 times higher than words you read silently. Neuroscientists call this the "production effect". When you read silently, you are receiving information in a visual way. When you read out loud, however, you are creating through the words you speak. The added dimensions to reading out loud reinforce your focus on the words you read making it easier for your brain to hold onto them for long-term memory. In addition, reading out loud increases your language fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension thanks to its multi-modal nature.

So next time you come across a really interesting article, passage in a book, poem, or anything else you enjoy reading, try the benefits of reading out loud. Here at the library, we're happy to help you find your next great read. Don't forget about participating in our Winter Reading Program for adults too! The program runs through the end of February. You can sign up at the circulation desk, and you get the opportunity to get a free book and entries for a prize drawing of Chamber Bucks at the end of the program.

The library is open Monday thru Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and on Friday and Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.