

Reader's Theater Exercise III

Using Pauses to Increase Audience Comprehension

Remind students that when speaking from a written text, the use of pauses is not restricted by the printed punctuation. Some sentences have long sequences and may contain too many words to be read aloud comfortably in one breath. When this happens, the students need to break it down into smaller sections and write in some extra punctuation marks to indicate where to pause for a breath. Usually the longer the sentence, the more pauses one will make. A common code for pauses is the double dash (//).

Here are some guidelines to help students determine when and where to add pauses when they read aloud.

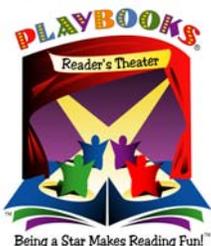
1. Use pauses after phrases that begin with prepositions and adverbs. For example:
 - a. By the end of the class period, (pause) Stacey had fallen asleep at her desk.
 - b. Despite all John's efforts, (pause) the team still lost the game.
 - c. Even if the students liked the fund raising project, (pause) it needed to be approved by the teacher.
2. Use pauses when running down a list of items. To help the listener better absorb information, it's a good idea to add a short pause after each item in a series. For example:
 - a. We need scissors, (pause) tape, (pause) cardboard, (pause) paints, (pause) brushes, (pause) water, (pause) and rags to make these drawings.
 - b. Before you can go out to play, you need to do your homework, (pause) clean your bedroom, (pause) and take out the trash.
3. Use pauses before connecting words such as "but," "or," "and," "because," "however," and so on. For example:
 - a. Stephanie is a good student, (pause) but she does like to talk in class.
 - b. It's snowing outside, (pause) so I want you to wear your boots.

Exercise 1 – Have the students read aloud the following quotes. The first time, they should read the quotes without pauses. The second time they should read the quotes with pauses. Record their readings and play it back to them to demonstrate the difference.

“Champions aren't made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them – a desire, a dream, a vision.” Muhammad Ali

“You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you can not fool all the people all the time.” Abraham Lincoln

“And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so? It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes, or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.” Dr. Seuss



Exercise 2 – Have the students write a one-page composition describing their daily activity. They're to use proper punctuation and include (//) dashes where they want to include additional pauses. Have each student read his or her composition aloud. The student audience will evaluate the reading based on how well the student used phrasing and pauses.