

# Guidelines for Contributing Read-Aloud Videos for Ethan's StoryTime Online

[www.ethanandchocosbookclub.com/ethans-storytime-online/](http://www.ethanandchocosbookclub.com/ethans-storytime-online/)

Thank you for wanting to create a read-aloud video (RAV) for ECBC, CHOC patients, and hospitalized kids everywhere! Here are some guidelines for creating and submitting a video. All RAVs that meet these guidelines will be posted. Remember that reading aloud comes naturally to very few. Doing it well usually requires practice!

## Choosing Books to Read Aloud

- Focus on reading aloud picture books that target 3 -10 year olds and that can be completed in a single sitting of 3 - 20 minutes. (Books may have only a few words on a page to multiple paragraphs.)
- Search for high-quality picture books. Aim for books with a good plot -- a plot where something happens that the reader/listener cares about and makes you want to turn the page to see what happens next. For younger kids, high quality read-alouds have appealing sounds (good rhythm, rhyme, lots of repetition, sounds that are silly or captivating) and/or simple but engaging plots. The best books tell a story that stays with the reader/listener for days afterwards.
- Avoid board books, chapter books, and leveled beginning reading books.
- Avoid "character" and mass media books such as Disney princess stories, television and movie character books, lego stories, and video game stories.
- Make sure you choose a book that you yourself enjoy!
- Select a book that is not already posted on the StoryTime Online page. If multiple RAVs are received using the same children's book, the RAV that more closely follows these guidelines will be selected.
- If you want some help selecting a book, check out the list of books we hope to feature (on our webpage).

## Introducing Yourself at the Start of the Video

- Start off your video by saying: **"Welcome to Ethan's Storytime Online, brought to you by Ethan & Choco's Book Club at CHOC Children's Hospital."**
- Then add: **"My name is (insert name), I am (insert age) years old, and I live in (insert city and state)."**

## Reading the Book Aloud

- Say the title of book, the first and last name of the author, and the first and last name of the illustrator if there is a different illustrator than the author (For example, **"Today I am going to read (insert title of book), written by (insert author's name) and illustrated by (insert illustrator's name)."**)
- Show the cover and give the listener time to see the illustration on the cover.
- Read slowly. The most common mistake is reading aloud too quickly!
- Adjust your speed to fit the story. For example, if a part is suspenseful, slow down and lower your voice.
- Read with vocal expression and use character voices. Where appropriate, change your tone of voice to fit the character and the dialogue.
- Show the illustrations, allowing time for the listener to see and analyze them. Allow the listener to view the illustrations *while* you are reading, which means the book must be faced towards the listener as you read.
- If/where appropriate, ask the listener one to a few thinking questions, such as:
  - "What do you think is going to happen next?"
  - "Has that ever happened to you?"
  - "How would that make you feel?"
  - "Why do you think (insert character's name) did that?"

After asking a question, wait a few seconds before you resume reading aloud. For video recordings, it will be helpful to figure out when ahead of time where in the book you plan to ask a question.

## Finishing the Book and Ending the Video

- Try to avoid reading the last sentence and ending the video abruptly! Briefly express your own excitement about the book -- possibly what you liked about the story or why you think it's special. For example, you might say: **"I just love this book so much because..."**
- If possible, end with one thought-provoking question that might leave the listener thinking about the book... You might lead into this by saying: **"Ok, before I say goodbye, I have a question for you..."** Good questions are open-ended (they don't have simple yes/no answers) and will often start with "why", "how", "have you", and "what if". Examples of questions are:
  - Do you like how the story ended? Why or why not?
  - What do you think would happen next, if the story were to go on?
  - What do you think the author wants you to learn from this story? Is there an important message?
  - What was your favorite part of the story?
  - How do you think (insert character name) felt when...?
  - What would you do if (insert an important event from the story) happened to you?
- End with a goodbye to your listener such as: **"Thank you so much for listening to this book with me!"**

## Some Additional Recommendations

- Practice first! Reading aloud well is difficult. And engaging your listener through a video tends to be even more challenging. Your read aloud doesn't have to be perfect. But reading aloud just one time before you record your video will familiarize you with the story, language, vocabulary, and where to change your voice and expression -- which will result in a better "official" read aloud.
- If there's a prologue, epilogue, or author's note that adds significant meaning to the story, include it in your read aloud. (E.g., "The author wrote a note to readers at the end of this book, let's see what he/she has to say")
- If you want, bring the author to life. Read aloud the information on the book's dust jacket. Either before, after, or during the reading, you might tell your listener something interesting about the author, especially if it's relevant to the story.
- When possible, add a third dimension to your read aloud. For example, for the book *Zeke Pippin* by William Steig, you might have a harmonica with you while you read. For the book *Blueberries for Sal* by Robert McCloskey, you might have a bowl of blueberries with you. For *Caps for Sale* (Esphyr Slobodkina), you might wear several colorful caps, and for *The Giving Tree* (Shel Silverstein) you might record your video sitting by a tree or on a tree stump!
- Check out [storylineonline.net](http://storylineonline.net) for examples of fantastic read aloud videos!

## Recording the RAV: Technical Tips

- Make sure to start recording a few seconds before the reader starts speaking, or else the first few seconds will be cut off.
- For most of the video, the listener should see both the reader and the illustrations.
- The recorder might want to zoom in on illustrations that are more detailed or particularly important.
- If possible, mount your camera or phone on a stand to help keep it steady.
- Try to record in a well-lit area!
- **Turn your phone horizontally (landscape mode) to record, which will eliminate the black side bars and allows your video to fill up an entire computer or tv screen**

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## Submitting the Video

1. Send an email to [ECBC@maxloveproject.org](mailto:ECBC@maxloveproject.org), with the subject line "Ethan's StoryTime Online". In the message, indicate the reader's name, age, city, and title of book read
2. After receiving an email, a link will be sent with instructions on how to upload your RAV to the Ethan's StoryTime Online playlist on the ECBC YouTube channel.