

Reading Nonfiction with Your Child

Many parents, grandparents, and other caregivers are beginning to understand how much the children in their lives love nonfiction and would like some guidance in sharing these info-licious books. Let's start with some great advice from award-winning author Nicola Davies:

Engaging Students During Read Alouds



Nicola Davis,
Celebrated UK nonfiction
author

“Reading nonfiction aloud requires a different approach. Instead of acting as a performer who must come up with different voices for each character, adults become co-discoverers.

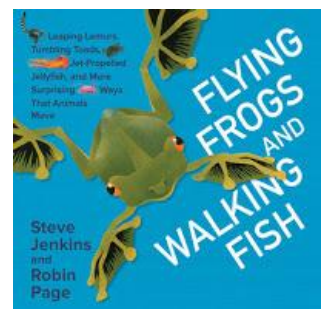
“What a lovely thing—to explore together. It’s so empowering for children to realize that adults don’t know everything and that learning is a lifelong endeavor.”

Before reading a nonfiction book with a child, ask yourself some questions:

- What parts of the book should I highlight?
- Should I skip over anything?
- Would additional visuals or props improve the experience?

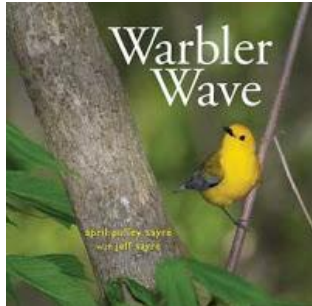
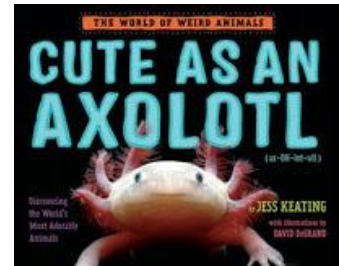
In some cases, it’s fine to skip some parts of the book. For example, in a book like *Flying Frogs and Walking Fish: Leaping Lemurs, Tumbling Toads, Jet-Propelled Jellyfish, and More Surprising Ways that Animals Move* by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page, some double-page spreads have six animal examples.

Depending on the age of your child, that may be too much. You may want to ask the child to choose just one example for you to share



during the read aloud. Then, if the child wants to know more, they can explore the rest of the examples themselves later.

In a book like *Cute as an Axolotl: Discovering the World's Most Adorable Animals* by Jess Keating, which has a lot of information on each page, you can share just a couple of spreads as a read aloud. As with *Flying Frogs and Walking Fish*, you can encourage an interested child to explore the rest of the book on their own.



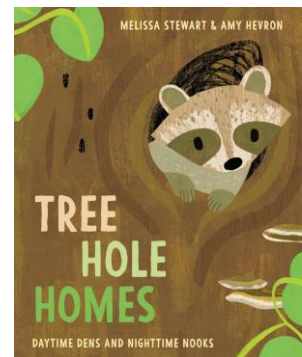
Books like *Warbler Wave* by April Pulley Sayre have a short, poetic main text with lots of interesting extra information in the backmatter. Feel free to take your time savoring the gorgeous language and stunning photographs. Then, as time permits, share just a few sections of the backmatter.

When it comes to nonfiction read alouds, there's no rule that says you have to read every single word!

During the read aloud, be sure to put expression into your reading. Be animated. Be dramatic. Show that you're eager to discover whatever fascinating facts and amazing ideas the author will reveal.

If a book has a repeated phrase, invite the child to join in for a chorus each time those words appear. For example, in *A Tree Hole Home*, the words "A tree hole home can be" are repeated many times.

Sometimes props, additional visuals, or simple activities can approve a read aloud experience, especially if a child has limited background knowledge of a topic. Try showing photographs of the animals included in the illustrations. If the book discusses an animal that is very large, use a tape measure and pieces of masking tape to show the animals size on the floor or in your driveway. This type of sharing will make the experience more fun and memorable for you and the child.



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