

## **How should I prepare to do storytelling at a library?**

Q: My first book (a picture book) will be published this fall and I am planning to volunteer at a local school or library to do a reading. While I have attended story times as a listener, I have never done the actual reading. Should I practice reading aloud to children before I volunteer?

Congratulations on your first book contract! Speaking and storytelling at schools, libraries and bookstores are excellent ways to spread the word about your book and to build name recognition as an author.

It's definitely a good idea to practice in front of children before making a formal appearance. The first few times, start with small groups of varying ages to see which kids are most receptive. Then work your way up in size and move from volunteering to being a paid speaker.

As you become more established, consider enhancing the reading with props, sound effects, gestures, dramatic voices, and other performing techniques. While none of these are required to do a good job, a lot of authors and illustrators have benefitted from adding dramatic effects to their presentation, and have been sought after as guest speakers. Some have even taken voice or acting lessons to hone their skills.

This investment in time (and sometimes money) can be worthwhile over the long term, especially if you plan to make a living as a children's book author. Many established authors have earned a substantial amount of their income appearing at schools and libraries and earning honorariums for their work. In a recent survey of 20 children's authors (from some who are moderately well-known to some big-name authors), I found that the going honorarium rate ranged from \$500-\$2,000 per day.

Even beginners on the lecture circuit should ask for some compensation for their time, as most seasoned speakers will agree. The reason is that in asking for a fee, an author or illustrator will be perceived as a professional, and treated accordingly.

When you're ready to start charging for your work, you may want to check SCBWI's Sample Lecture Contract, since formalizing the agreement in writing is also important. 4:5/96