

Readings

The hallmark of an accomplished reading is that it has imparted the feel of the author. This takes a fair degree of skill to judge the subtle inflections required.

This is also very good practise for other speaking activities since the material is already prepared so the speaker can just concentrate on delivery.

With practise, you'll be conveying your audience to far off places and getting to know all manner of interesting characters.

Preparation

Physically prepare the reading material.

- Newspapers and magazines - These tend to flap and signal nervousness. Cut or photocopy the bits out and mount them onto a piece of card, or even a clip board.
- Books - A small book. If it is in small print, enlarge it on a good photocopier. If the book is a suitable size, rather than turning over the pages photocopy all your material onto one page, then fold this into the middle of the book. A big book, Do make sure it is not too heavy for you to hold easily.

Marking Up - Delete unnecessary text, and highlight or underline sections where you wish to vary your voice or add emphasis. The writer has provided the words, but it is up to you to convey them to the audience with meaning, life and emotion where appropriate.

Rehearsal

Even a short notice reading should be read through at least three times so that you become familiar with the content.

Practise scanning ahead. You don't have to memorise word for word but you should be able to glance down at the text, take in a whole sentence, then lift your head while you are actually speaking. But not repetitively!

If you find it hard to keep track of where you are in your reading, use your fingers to mark where you are so that you can quickly locate where you're up to.

Use punctuation properly. The writer put it in for a purpose. Use it!

If you are reading dialogue, try to use a different voice or accent for each character. This is 'acting', but if you can do it well it is very powerful.

Before the occasion, check that there is enough light for you to read easily, and demand more if you can't.

Delivery

If you are not heard, you have wasted your time and your audience's time. Open your mouth, breath deeply.

Stand up straight and hold the text approximately just below chin level. This:

- does not mask your face and expression.

- allows a greater volume of air to be inhaled by opening your lungs.
- allows you to look at the audience as much as you can.
- establishes audience rapport.

While it is initially very difficult, never open your mouth while your eyes are off the audience.

Some readers can drop the text down at an important point to add emphasis.

Selection

- If you have the opportunity to choose your topic: Pick something you are comfortable with.
- Consider your audience....will it interest them?
- Technical stuff can become unintelligible
- Don't be too ambitious at first.....Shakespeare and the Bible are quite difficult.