

Guidelines for Reading Out Loud When Alone

There are teachers and professors who ask you to read your papers out loud to help you “fix” errors. But what does this really mean?

Are reading out loud and reading to yourself really that different? Yes, they *are*. This can be hard to see unless you try it yourself.

If you're uncomfortable reading your paper out loud to others, there are alternatives. It certainly helps to read with others around since someone else can see problems where you don't see any. There are still benefits to reading out loud when alone if you just keep these ideas in mind:

- ➔ Pay attention to what you are saying and what you have written – they aren't always the same thing! Try to read out loud exactly what you've written.
- ➔ Realize that if you are stumbling over the words (hesitating, reading twice before speaking, looking back to make certain you read it right), it usually means that you might want to go back and change something. Stop yourself and ask: “What is it that I'm *trying* to say?” Then ask yourself: “Did I say that?”
- ➔ Clarifying things in your head (stopping to think over sentences and find meaning) isn't the same as clarifying them on paper. If you have to stop and think about it, then you probably want to explain yourself more clearly on the page. You want your reader to understand your paper, not be confused by it.
- ➔ Pretend that you're reading your paper to your audience, whether that audience is your professor, your boss, an application committee, a review board, or someone else entirely. If you use words in your paper that you wouldn't say to that person (or people), then you should go back and change those words or phrases.
- ➔ Remember to pause at each comma and every period. There should be a reason for every comma, and if it sounds funny you need to check and make certain you've placed it in the right spot.
- ➔ Don't be afraid to feel “stupid.” If you can't talk while completely alone, find a pet to talk to – or even try talking to yourself in the mirror.