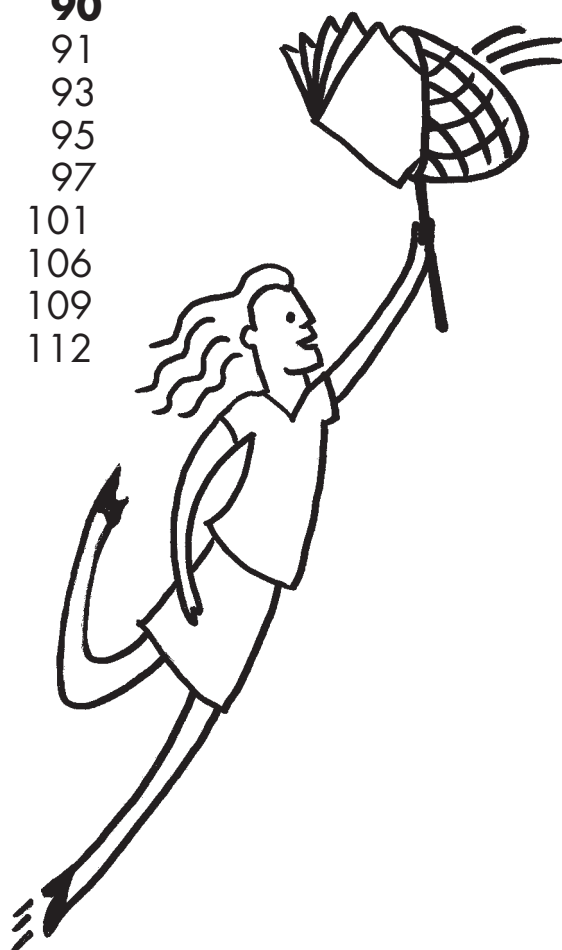


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## Introduction

It's the first day of school. You're excited to meet your students. Some are the siblings of students you have taught in the past, so you know their names, but others are new to you. You met a few last week when you were working in your room, decorating bulletin boards and planning lessons, but you really don't know what they're like.

A little before 8.00 a.m., you open your door so that students can come in when they arrive. When a boy whose older brother you taught a few years ago enters the room, you greet him and chat briefly. Since you read a number of enjoyable novels over the summer, you decide to tell him about one and ask what he read. He listens politely to your brief comments, but his face looks blank. When you ask if he read anything that he liked, he thinks for a minute and then shakes his head no. You feel as if he questions why you would read when you're on holiday, but you set that feeling aside.

Once class gets underway, you do all the paperwork that is so much a part of the first day of school. Then you take out the three books you planned to share with your class before they go to the library to get the first book they will read this year. No-one groans, but no-one looks particularly interested either. You figure that's because it's the first day of school. You talk enthusiastically about the three books – one mystery, one realistic fiction and one fantasy. When you finish, a girl raises her hand. You're eager to hear what she has to say, but flinch when she asks if they have to read a book. But you're the teacher – you have to set the example. So you make a few remarks about the joys of reading, the worlds you can enter through books, the people you get to know, the insights you gain. No-one looks convinced.

Once you get to the library, the librarian remarks on a full cart of new novels and points out a display of good books to read. She speaks enthusiastically, just as you did in the classroom. Once the students are up and browsing, you begin to circulate, encouraging students to read various books that you know are good. The librarian does the same. Still, the feeling prevails that your students are less than enthusiastic about reading.



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Finally, everyone has a book and is seated for ten minutes of reading. You look around, hoping to see happy students reading good books and you do see some. But a number of students are whispering, looking around the library or fiddling with a pencil instead of reading. You walk over to them, get them focused on their books and once again think about ways to get students to read without a lot of intervention on your part. You know that your students have to read to be successful. And you wonder if you're ready for another year.

The above scene is probably repeated in schools across the nation throughout the school year. Much of the behaviour of students who either read poorly and/or don't like to read can drive a teacher crazy. Such behaviour includes:

- During silent reading the weak readers in the class don't start reading. They look around the room, fiddle, get a drink and perhaps don't even have the book they should be reading.
- When the teacher hands out a book that the class will read, someone remarks that it's a dumb book'.
- During discussion, those students who haven't read the assignment slouch in their chairs, rarely paying attention.
- A student completes the written assignment for a book or story but is unable to participate in discussion. When asked if they read the assignment, the student says yes, but it's clear that they only skimmed for answers to the questions.



How can a teacher deal with students who are uninterested in reading and have poor reading skills, and students with skills who find television and video games more compelling than books? That is the question this book addresses. The answer lies in a combination of philosophy and specific techniques that the classroom teacher can employ to get students to read and, consequently, to improve their reading skills.

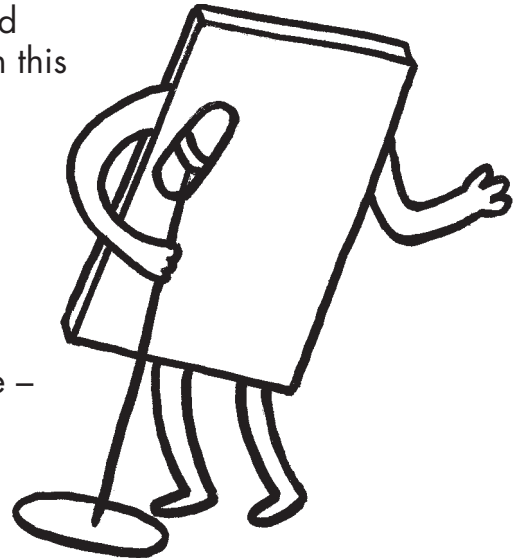
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## How to Use this Book

*How to Teach Reading without Going Crazy* is designed to help you assess your current reading program, make effective additions and changes, and provide you with the resources to improve and expand your students' reading experiences.

Part I focuses on ways to organise, manage and evaluate a reading-centred classroom. The chapters in this part cover:

- principles on which to base a strong reading program
- how to create a classroom environment that encourages students to read
- testing and evaluation methods
- the need for daily reading time
- the need to expose students to great literature – and ways to make it come alive for them
- effective communication paths for connecting with parents.



Part II details a number of ways students can share what they read – a critical element in a successful reading program. The chapters in this section provide you with ideas and information for involving students in sharing individually, in pairs and in small groups. Sample worksheets are included.

In Part III you'll find a number of book lists that provide information about books that are good choices to include in your reading program. In addition to publishing information, a synopsis of each book is provided. These lists, which note titles by genre, can guide you and your students on trips to the bookshop and the library.

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# Part I

## Managing the Reading Classroom

An effective reading program is a complicated combination of curriculum, practice, materials, classroom environment and relationships built on a foundation of 'best practice' instructional principles. As the program undergoes change or modification, it should be grounded in the principles that the teacher and the school have established for their reading program. When teachers communicate with the home, they will be able to explain the program more easily if basic principles have been established. When a teacher meets with colleagues to discuss any portion of the program, that discussion should be guided by the principles on which the program is based.

Clearly, however, principles are not enough. They must be followed by good practice. This encompasses everything from classroom environment to testing, from reading every day to using great literature, to making a connection with parents or guardians. By focusing on all of these areas, a teacher can create an exciting reading environment in the classroom and develop an influential relationship with the home. In years 4 to 8, students read at a variety of levels, so the classroom should provide reading materials with a wide range of interest.

The middle years reading teacher needs a lot of knowledge and some 'tricks of the trade' to help all students improve their skills and increase their interest in reading.

