



Author Visits: 10 Tips for Revving Up!

by Alexis O'Neill

You're published. Or soon-to-be-published. You want to do school visits, but you're not sure how to get your motor running. Here are ten tips to help you roar into this exciting part of the children's book business.

1. **CREATE** promotional materials. Make it easy for potential hosts to contact you. Establish a website and/or a blog. Produce a brochure and business card. Make a book trailer and post it on YouTube.
2. **WATCH** other authors and illustrators in action at bookstores, libraries, author festivals, conferences and in schools. Note what they do that the audiences love – and what you love, too!
3. **ATTEND** events that draw teachers and librarians such as state conferences for reading teachers, teachers of English, school librarians and specialty disciplines that relate to your book or books. Propose doing a session at these events.
4. **DESIGN** your presentation. Think, "What do I want my audience to be able to do as a result of my presentation? What value will my presentation add to their lives?" Plan sessions in 15-, 30-, 45- and 60-minute segments so that you'll be prepared for a variety of settings. No matter the age level of the audience, lots of visuals and interaction make for a winning presentation.
5. **TEST** your presentation on groups of children in your local community. Ask the teacher to provide feedback to you on your presentation's strengths and weaknesses.
6. **REFINE** your presentation based on feedback. Try out the new and improved version.
7. **DECIDE** what you will charge for your school visit. If you're not sure, explore authors' and publishers' websites to find out what others charge. For examples, see: www.Scholastic.com/authorvisits or www.simonsays.com/extras/pdfs/authorkit.pdf.

8. **PREPARE** the paperwork you'll need to carry out the business side of doing presentations: for starters, create a booking form, contract or letter of agreement, and invoice template.

9. **ASSEMBLE** a pre-visit packet to send to hosts who have booked you. This will help them prepare students for your visit. (Some authors do this as downloads from their website, others send materials in the mail.) This packet might include your photo and bio, information about your books, supplemental activities, a master for autographed bookmarks and any relevant reviews and news clips.

10. **SHARE** your successes and failures. Keep in touch with other authors and illustrators who visit schools. Even experienced presenters lay eggs! Laughter will get you through.

Bonus Tip: Become known locally first. Your city. Your county. Your region. Your state. Put your energies here, first. Let everyone you meet know that you love doing school visits. It takes time to build a good reputation, so don't lose heart!

Are your engines running? Good! And be sure to get in touch with me if you have any questions or need encouragement. Vroom, vroom!

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