

Random House Children's Books School Visit Guide for Authors!

School visits are exciting events that foster enthusiasm for learning. When students meet authors, they are inspired to read more and become more engaged with the writing process. For information on best practices for a successful visit, look no further! This guide is packed with tips to help you choose what type of visit would be most successful for different age groups and even includes advice from veteran authors to ensure you and the students get the most out of your visit!

School Visits 101

Are you considering doing a school visit but don't know where to start? Here are some helpful tips to consider!

Tips for Presenting to Grades Preschool-3

- It might be helpful to think of these visits as storytimes!
 - Storytimes typically consist of a read-aloud of your book, with a very brief introduction.
- Crafts and other activities relating to themes presented in the book are always a hit, and a nice thing to leave behind for classrooms to work on after you leave!
- Is there a hidden fact about your book that you could share with the kids?
- You may consider a short Q&A; just be mindful that these questions will probably be about your likes and dislikes (your favorite color, animal, etc.).

Tips for Presenting to Grades 4-8

- Interactive presentations are best for this age group.
- Consider creating a thematic PowerPoint presentation based on your book.
- Did you discover your love of writing in grade school? Did you write a book when you were their age?
- Share an old class photo in your presentation. The kids will get a kick out of seeing what you were like when you were their age.
- **Pro Tip:** Ask the teacher to prepare some questions with the students in advance of your visit.

Tips for Presenting to Grades 9-12

- Presentations that center around specific topics and themes tend to work best. Here are some examples:
 - Share personal connections and inspirations behind your writing.
 - Create a presentation on your journey to becoming a published author, including pitfalls, unexpected lessons, what it was like watching your book come to life, etc.
 - Share any research techniques, tips, or tricks you may have picked up along the way. These are invaluable to students, and most will try to implement them in their writing.

Tips for Illustrators and Graphic Novelists

- Live drawings are always a big hit, especially with a younger audience. Try making it interactive by asking for suggestions of what to draw!
- For younger grades, you may consider providing a craft, like a premade coloring sheet or pre-cut shapes that they can assemble in the character's likeness.
- For middle-grade and older audiences, consider a guided step-by-step lesson where students can learn to draw one of your characters.
- For the budding illustrators in your audience, consider a short PowerPoint using your initial storyboard sketches and walk them through the book-making process.
- **Pro Tip:** To make a lasting impression, consider leaving the art you create during your visit for the school to display.

Signing Options and Tips (All Grades)

- If you have agreed to sign copies of your book(s) in advance, you may request a space away from the kids either before or after the visit to sign books. This cuts down on the signing time and is a good option if you have more than one visit in a day and are short on time.
- If you would rather sign with the kids present, you will have one-on-one time with the students, and it can be an unforgettable and rewarding experience—you may be the only author they ever meet!
- **Pro Tip:** To streamline the process even further, ask the school to “flap” books to the title page, and insert a sticky note with the child's name on it.
 - “Flap” means to fold the cover flap into the title page so it acts as a bookmark.

How Schools Prepare for Your Visit

We encourage schools to read the book or at least a few chapters with their students to get them excited about meeting you and to get them thinking about questions they might have about your book. The book signing should be scheduled into your visit time and coordinated with you in advance of the event.

Curious about what else schools may do to prepare for your visit?

Check out the [“Hosting an Author Visit”](#) page on the Random House Teachers & Librarians website!

Tips for Authors from Authors

CHRIS GRABENSTEIN

Grades Preschool–7

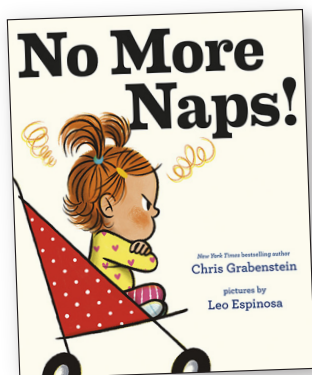
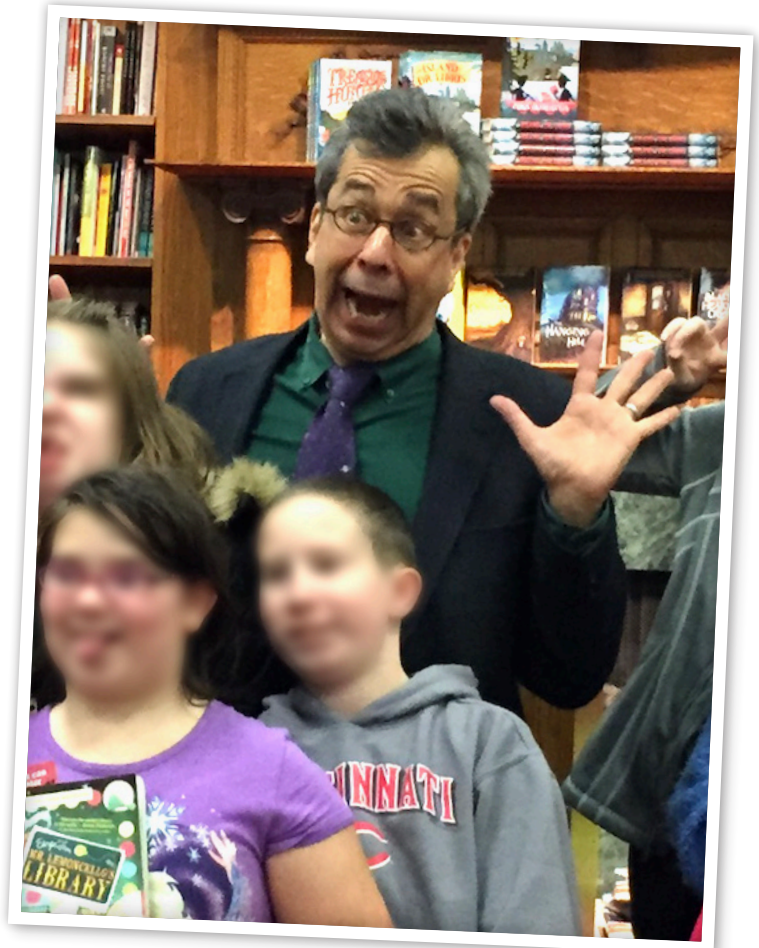
Make connections between your book and the curriculum. Don't just promote your books; use them to illustrate the teachers' points in the classrooms. They'll love you for it.

Attention spans are short. Keep your presentation moving. Earn the wiggly kids' attention. Remember, these kids are not used to sitting for long periods listening to lectures. They want entertainment. Always have an icebreaker. I show my fifth-grade class picture and have fun with the kids trying to guess which ten-year-old kid is me.

Audience participation is key to keeping the students engaged. If possible, work interactive elements into the presentation. When the teachers start pulling out their cameras to take a snapshot of their kids doing something with you, you've won.

Leave time to answer questions. Always repeat the question so the audience can hear it. You will get some strange questions. Roll with it. When you get to "What's your favorite color? What's your favorite food? What's your favorite animal?" you know it's time to wrap things up.

Don't be afraid to ask for audio-visual equipment. Insist on an awesome microphone connected to an even better sound system. You will be amazed at how much that will help you keep the attention of kids sitting on a gymnasium floor.



Tips for Authors from Authors

CHAD SELL

Grades: 4–7

Know your audience. I always try to get a sense of how many kids will be attending my virtual events ahead of time and plan my presentation accordingly. When I do visits with small groups, I can engage directly with kids who have questions or want to share their creations. That can be fun, but with larger groups, that level of engagement simply isn't possible, and so I focus more on my slideshow, drawing demonstration, and answering the questions submitted ahead of time.

FAQ, it's all about YOU! If you're frequently asked the same questions, why not incorporate those topics into your slideshow? It's what the people want to know!

Get help. Talk to your host ahead of time about what kind of help or support you'd like for your event. I encourage educators to chime in with questions or check in about how we're doing on time. They can monitor the questions that come in and help in case of technical difficulties.

Kids LOVE pets. I have a cat who loves to make guest appearances during my virtual events. Don't fight it—embrace your animal companions and show them off!

You are your own cinematographer. Do your best to find nice lighting and a tidy backdrop for your presentation! Look into getting a decent camera and microphone, too! No one expects you to show up on a Hollywood set, but you should do everything you can to make sure you can be seen and heard clearly.



Tips for Authors from Authors

TRUDY LUDWIG

Grades: Preschool–3

Location, location, location. Try to reserve winter bookings for those schools in regions/locations with more temperate climates to minimize last-minute rescheduling and flight cancellations/delays due to inclement weather. If you need to fly to destinations known for seasonal weather extremes, you may want to give yourself an extra traveling day to arrive in time for the scheduled school visit. You'll also feel less stressed while traveling—especially if your destination is in a different time zone.

Maximize your visibility with multiple visits.

Encourage schools to see if any neighboring schools may be interested in piggybacking an author visit with theirs by offering a discounted daily author rate for a multiple-school visit. They'd also be able to share the costs of reimbursable travel expenses (i.e., airfare, ground transportation, lodging, meals, etc.), making the author visit more affordable for all!

Set boundaries with the students. Schools love it when a visiting author shows effective crowd-management skills. At the beginning of your assembly, set clear parameters with the students. Then share with them a visual or verbal cue you will do to regain their attention. It helps to practice this cue with younger audiences. If you don't know an effective crowd-management technique, ask the school administrator or teacher for signals they find helpful to get their students to refocus and listen.

