

What is Reading Fluency?



Fluency is often defined as the *rate* (words per minute) and *accuracy* (number of words correctly identified) with which students perform reading tasks.

An additional dimension to fluency is known as *prosody*, or the rhythms and tones of spoken language. Where text is being read silently or aloud, much of its meaning comes from the way it sounds. Students who read with expression are able to segment text into meaningful units, marking phrase and sentence boundaries with pauses, vowel lengthening and changes in pitch and emphasis.

When students have learned to decode and automatically recognize many words by sight, they begin to read simple text aloud in a way that sounds like natural speech. By second grade, fluent reading is generally expected, yet a great deal of foundation building must occur in order to make it happen. Students in the upper grades who read aloud word by word or with little attention to commas or periods require intervention.

Why Reading Fluency? What does research say?



A fluent reader decodes text automatically, and therefore can devote his /her attention to comprehending what is read.

Laberge & Samuels

Achieving fluency is recognized as an important aspect of proficient reading, but it remains a neglected goal of reading instruction

Richard Allington

With greater fluency, readers can concentrate on comprehending what they read, develop greater self-confidence, and enjoy reading more.

Gillet & Temple

If we provide diverse learners with the tools and strategies for achieving automatic and fluent word recognition, we increase their chances for successful reading experiences.

Chard, Simmons, & Kameenui

When children are allowed to reread familiar material, they are being allowed to learn to be readers, to read in ways which draw on all their language resources and knowledge of the world, to put this very complex recall and sequencing behavior into a fluent rendering of the text. The orchestration of these complex behaviors cannot be achieved on a hard book.

Clay, M. (1991)
Becoming Literate: The construction of inner control (p. 184)

Fluency Rubric



1

- Very little fluency
- All word-by-word reading with some long pauses between words
- Almost no recognition of syntax or phrasing (expressive interpretation)
- Very little evidence of awareness of punctuation
- Perhaps a couple of two-word phrases, but generally disfluent
- Some word groupings awkward

2

- Mostly word-by-word reading, but some two-word phrasing and even a couple of three or four-word phrases (expressive interpretation)
- Evidence of syntactic awareness of syntax and punctuation, although not consistently so
- Rereading for problem solving may be present

3

- A mixture of word-by-word reading and fluent, phrased reading (expressive interpretation)
- Evidence of attention to punctuation and syntax
- Rereading for problem solving may be present

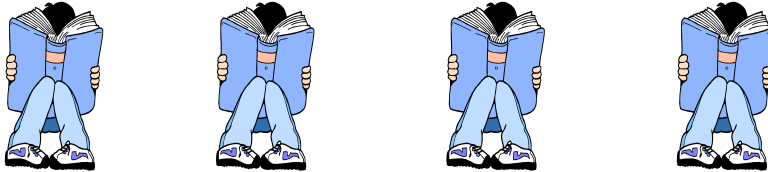
4

- Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrases
- Fluent, phrased reading with a few word-by-word slow downs for problem solving
- Expressive interpretation is evident at places throughout the reading
- Attention to punctuation and syntax
- Rereading for problem solving may be present, but is generally fluent

Auditory Modeling

Auditory modeling may be the most powerful technique for developing prosodic reading.

Choral Reading: reading aloud simultaneously in a group



Echo Reading: reading aloud phrase by phrase, slightly after a live or taped model



Shared Reading: teaching reading aloud with all the students



Partner Reading: reading aloud taking turns with a partner who provides word identification help and feedback

