

Fluency with Connected Text Activities

Fluency is the ability to read a text smoothly and accurately. Fast, accurate word recognition alone is not enough for fluent reading. These activities help children develop fluency in reading words that have been put together in sentences. You select the decodable sentences or passages of text for children to practice reading fluently. If a child struggles to decode lots of words in a text, choose an easier text for fluency practice.

I. Timed Oral Reading with a Passage

Purpose: *Read a passage accurately at an appropriate rate*

Materials: *Passages copied from reading materials*

For each child, select a passage of text you think the child could read successfully after about a minute's practice. Choose passages from texts children have read. Make two copies of each passage, one for a child and one for yourself.

Have a child read the passage you chose for her as you time her. On your copy of the passage, circle words the child struggles to read, misreads, or skips. (If a child struggles with lots of words, choose an easier or shorter passage. If a child reads the passage accurately at an appropriate rate on the first try, select a more difficult passage.) When the child finishes, write her time on your paper and share the results with her. Point out and reread with her words she struggled with, misread, or skipped. Mark the words on the child's copy so she knows those are the words or parts of the passage she should try to read better.

Have the child practice reading the passage again and again, either quietly to herself or to a partner, classroom volunteer, or adult at home. Explain that her goal is to read the passage correctly and at a faster pace than she did before. When she thinks she can do this, have the child read the passage to you again as you time her. Give the child feedback about improvements in accuracy and speed.

TIP: Balancing speed and accuracy Point out to children that the first time they read a text, they might need to read slowly to decode the words correctly. Explain that by rereading the text several times, they should be able to increase their speed and understanding. Make sure they understand they should not be trying to read as fast as they possibly can. Their goal is to read the text accurately and smoothly at a pace that allows them to attend to the meaning. If they read too quickly, they are likely to make mistakes and misunderstand what they read.

2. Using Fluency Skills While Reading

Purpose: *Develop skills to read fluently*

Have children listen as you read a few sentences or paragraphs of a decodable text they have read. Read the same part twice, once to model how a reader uses a particular fluency skill and once to demonstrate what it sounds like when a reader doesn't use the skill. (See the chart at the end of this activity for a list of fluency skills, how fluent readers use them, and what nonfluent readers do instead.) Have children discuss which reading was easier to understand and why. Help them recognize it's easier to follow the meaning of text when it's read fluently.

Have children practice applying the fluency skill as they read the same part of the text with you several times. Then have them practice reading the same part or another part with a partner. Remind them of the fluency skill they are working on and what they need to do to apply the skill. Monitor their oral reading and provide corrective feedback.

Variation If a child struggles with fluency, provide individualized instruction one-on-one. Have the child read a passage of text to you. Identify the ways in which her reading was not fluent. (If the child struggled to decode lots of the words, select an easier text.) Choose one or two fluency skills that would help the child most to read the text more fluently. Explain and model the skills. Have her try to apply the skills as she reads the passage with you and then to you several more times. Provide feedback and encouragement with each reading.

Developing Fluency Skills

Skill	To read fluently, you should . . .	Without fluency, you might . . .
Accuracy	Read the words correctly. Notice if you read a word incorrectly or missed a word and reread the part.	Misread words or skip words without noticing.
Observing punctuation	Pay attention to commas and end marks while reading. Pause at commas and stop briefly at the end of a sentence before starting the next sentence.	Run sentences together without stopping between them.
Natural phrasing	Read the text smoothly, stopping only briefly for commas and end marks. Don't stop at the end of a line if a sentence continues to the next line.	Add extra pauses in the middle of sentences or pause too long at the end of sentences.
Natural expression	Notice quotations marks around the words a character says. Read the words the way the character would have spoken them. Think about how the character would have been feeling. If a sentence ends in an exclamation mark, read it with strong feeling.	Read without any emotion. Read the sentences the same way, whether they are characters' words or narration.
Appropriate rate	Read at a speed that allows you to understand what the sentences mean.	Read so slowly that you lose track of the ideas. Or read so fast that you can't catch what the text is saying.
Appropriate stress	Notice typographical clues—words that are underlined, in bold, or in uppercase letters. Read these words in a strong voice.	Read the words in the same way, even if the words are in bold or uppercase letters.
Proper pitch and volume	Read in a clear voice that is loud enough for everyone to hear.	Mumble when reading. Read in a voice that is too quiet for others to hear or so loud that it hurts their ears.
Appropriate rhythm for a poem	Notice the pattern of repeating or rhyming words in a poem. Read the words so you hear the rhythm, or beat, of the poem.	Add extra pauses or group phrases in a way that makes it hard to hear the rhythm of the poem.

TIP: Reading fluently takes practice The first time children read a text they might not be able to read it fluently. They might need to read slowly in order to read carefully. They might add pauses when they stop to decode unfamiliar words. As they work hard to read the words, they might not be aware of how the words would be spoken. Let children know this okay. With practice, they should be able to read a text more fluently. Each time they read it, they are likely to read faster, more smoothly, and with better expression.

3. Oral Reading Practice in Different Ways

Purpose: *Build fluency through repeated oral reading practice*

Materials: *Passages from reading materials*

Repeated oral reading practice is one of the best ways to develop children's fluency. Here are a few ways you can give children practice:

Choral Reading Model reading a short section of text. Have children read the section with you. Be sure your own voice leads the way. Read the section together until children are reading fluently. Choral reading in a group works best with short selections.

Paired Choral Reading Have a child and an adult (yourself, an aide, or a volunteer) read a text in unison. If the child has trouble reading a word or stumbles over a part, the adult stops and helps the child read it. Then the two continue reading together. When the child is ready to read alone, she indicates with a nonverbal signal, such as raising a finger, nodding a head, or tapping on the table. If the child struggles while reading, the adult reads in unison again until the child signals she wants to read alone.

Echo Reading Read a sentence from a section of text. Have children read the same sentence after you. Or pair a child with an adult and have the child read each sentence after the adult reads it. Echo reading is particularly helpful for phrasing practice, rhythmic reading, or expressive reading.

Repeated Reading with a Partner Assign children a passage of text. Have them practice reading the passage quietly to themselves several times. Have them take turns reading the passage to a partner. Or have one partner read a paragraph and the other read the next paragraph until they finish the passage. Have them switch who reads first.

Record Own Reading Have children read a passage of text a few times. Have them record themselves reading it. Tell them to listen to their recording. If they made mistakes or think they could improve their reading, they should re-record themselves. When they feel they've made their best recording, have them give it to you to evaluate.