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# The LeafLIT

**A Literacy Publication**

## Fluency—The Neglected Aspect of Reading

Just what is fluency and why is it important?

By *Michele Guldner & Robbin Pryor*



The best overall explanation is from the National Reading Panel (2000), which states fluency is the ability to read text with speed, accuracy and proper expression. Fluent readers recognize words automatically. They read aloud effortlessly and with expression. They do not need to concentrate on decoding so they can focus on comprehension.

When discussing reading skills with both teachers and parents, fluency is the one skill which requires the most explanation. Everyone understands why comprehension skills are important; but what about fluency? Why is it important to determine how fast someone reads? Fluency creates a path between word recognition and comprehension. (Reading Links, 2002, page 9) Just because a student can read fluently does not guarantee adequate comprehension, but it helps. The theory is if the student can maintain a fluent rate they can concentrate on the various levels of comprehension. They are able to analyze, interpret, draw conclusions and make inferences from the text. Fluency develops gradually over time with a significant amount of practice.

Now we get to the important part: just how do we teach fluency? The first thing to do is look at the four components of fluency instruction. Model fluent reading, use oral reading instruction, provide opportunities for students to practice, and perform and implement word study activities to build accuracy. These activities can be imbedded into the curriculum during whole group instruction, reading groups, literacy centers, read aloud, silent reading time, and practice at home. Practicing at home provides a very important opportunity for the student to reread passages from school. Studies do show that there are positive correlations between reading ability and the amount of reading done by the student (NIFL Put Reading First K-3). The final piece of this is assessing fluency. This can be accomplished by using running records or miscue analyses. When the word fluency is searched via the Internet, there are many activities that can be utilized in various educational environments.



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Reading A-Z provides the following fluency chart-

Research Study Recommendations  
Words Per Minute (WPM)

Reading A – Z Recommendations  
Words Per Minute (WPM)

Grade	Rasinski	Manzo	Harris& Sipay	Early Rate	End Rate
1	80	(1.8) 30-54	60-90	50	70
2	90	(2.8) 66-104	85-120	70	100
3	110	(3.8) 86-124	115-140	100	130
4	140	(4.8) 95-130	140-170	130	140
5	150	(5.8)108-140	170-195	140	160
6	180	(6.8)112-145	195-220	160	170

There are many simple activities which can be used, from songs, poems, nursery rhymes to reader's theater. The good news is, these activities do not require expensive special programs. Most can be easily found in the school library or on the computer. Students can be chosen to read aloud to the class. Choral reading and echo reading can be used as a small group activity. Books on tape and buddy reading can be used as centers for independent learning. Readers Theater is a great project for students of all reading levels. It is a great confidence booster, not to mention fun!

## ACTIVITIES/STRATEGIES

Echo reading- The teacher reads one sentence with appropriate intonation and phrasing. The student then tries to imitate this oral reading model. This continues until the student can imitate more than one sentence at a time.

Neurological Impress- Select a short passage that is easy for the student to read. Sit behind the student holding the book in front of the child so you can speak into the dominate ear. Read together as in "one voice" with the teacher moving along the line of print. The passage should be read slightly beyond the student's normal rate so attention is paid to whole words and sentences.

Choral Reading- Select a poem and a book, read it to the group. Have them practice reading until they can read with "one voice". Students can be divided to read certain parts. I Am the Dog, I Am the Cat would be a good book choice because it allows for different types of expression.

Predictable Language- Choose a book that contains a predictable pattern such as a repeated sentence or sentence pattern. During the second reading, have a students join in the reading. During subsequent readings, use pictures and predictable language until the student is ready to read the book on his own.

Taped Reading—Allow the student to read a short passage to himself. Then have him read the passage into a tape recorder.

Readers' Theater-Pick a story or play the students can read. Have them practice reading until they have developed the correct intonation. They can then present to others.

Sources—1. Reading A-Z.com, National Reading Panel, Put Reading First (K-3)



Visit [www.rpd.net](http://www.rpd.net) for Fluency Resources