



Oral Reading Fluency

What is oral reading fluency?

Oral reading fluency is the ability to read texts aloud with accuracy, appropriate speed and prosody (expression and phrasing). Reading fluency has been identified as a key component of successful reading (Konza, 2016).

Recent research supports that fluency is impacted by decoding and word recognition and shows that reading fluency is supported by comprehension (Hudson et al., 2020).

What are the main aspects of oral reading fluency?

There are 3 main aspects of reading fluency that can be taught and assessed. They are:

1. Reading accuracy
2. Reading with appropriate speed
3. Prosody (reading with expression and phrasing).

Why is reading fluency important?

Reading is a complex cognitive process whereby skilled readers decode texts to make meaning. Research such as Stevens et al., (2017) has demonstrated a positive link between fluency and reading comprehension.

However, reading comprehension is not automatic even when fluency is strong, so educators need to ensure the teaching of comprehension occurs in conjunction with teaching fluency (Duke, Ward & Pearson, 2021).

This paper relates to the following Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Standard 1

Know students and how they learn

1.2 Understand how students learn

Standard 2:

Know the content and how to teach it

2.1 Content and teaching strategies of the teaching area

2.5 Literacy and numeracies strategies

Standard 3:

Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning

3.3 Use teaching strategies



How can fluency be addressed in the classroom?

The elements that underpin fluency, such as phonological awareness, phonemic awareness and phonics, support word recognition and need to be developed over time so that students can read accurately and with appropriate speed.

Additionally, ensuring students understand the texts they read will enhance the reciprocal relationship between comprehension and fluency.

Differentiated teaching of fluency is important, as not all students will automatically develop reading fluency. Monitoring fluency will help teachers determine if students are improving their decoding skills as well as their ability to apply elements of oral language to the text (Kuhn, 2020).

The explicit teaching of reading fluency includes **demonstrating what fluent reading sounds like; explaining to students**

the relationship between fluency and comprehension and planning sequences of learning that support students to build skills in reading speed, accuracy and prosody.

The explicit teaching of fluency involves using a wide range of texts, including texts for repeated readings and texts which take into account students' interests, background knowledge and knowledge of vocabulary.

Reading with prosody involves applying the stresses and intonations of oral language to written texts (Kuhn, 2020).

Expression is created by stressing words at appropriate points and reading aloud words in meaningful phrases. **Attending to punctuation helps prosody.**

Teachers can support students to note punctuation and see where sentences can be broken up into meaningful phrases. This may include identifying declarative sentences that require a decline in pitch; identifying questions which require a raise in pitch; identifying where pauses are appropriate and using expression for character dialogue.

Prosody is central to reading fluency and comprehension.

Repeated readings

Repeated readings of a text or section of a text may positively impact fluency, particularly for students who have reading difficulties (Hudson et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2017; Kuhn, 2020; Stevens et al., 2017).

Repeated readings can be organised in the classroom in ways that students find engaging.

For example:



reading texts with a partner



recording reading on a digital device

00:00:00

measuring reading speed with an egg timer



practising a text to read to an audience



using a fluency phone to listen to yourself read (fluency phones can be purchased from educational suppliers or made by using a PVC pipe or flexible tube)



marking sections in the text that are significant, such as highlighting the full stops or dialogue

Additional benefits of repeated readings include multiple exposure to vocabulary, and grammatical and spelling patterns.

Independent reading

The practice of independent reading following a teaching session can be used for students to practice accuracy, speed and expression. When reading independently students may be guided to read texts the teacher has selected, but there should also be an opportunity for students to select the texts they would like to use to practise fluent reading.

Modelled reading, shared reading and choral reading

Common teaching practices can be used to address fluency. During modelled reading sessions teachers can draw attention to fluent reading and demonstrate how phrasing and expression can aid meaning making. During shared reading sessions, teachers' guidance can help students read sections of a text with fluency. Texts suited to read aloud, such as poems or chants, can be read in choral reading sessions (where the group read together).

Rhyming poetry and Readers' Theatre

The use of rhyming poems and [Readers' Theatre](#) have been found to be effective oral reading strategies which enhance students' phonological awareness, and knowledge of orthographic patterns and phonemes. These strategies have been shown to improve oral reading fluency (Rasinski et al., 2016).

Fluency goal setting

Teachers and students can set and monitor goals for reading fluency. Goals may be set around word accuracy, prosody or reading with appropriate speed. However, caution needs to be taken when setting goals about appropriate speed of reading. Studies have highlighted that measuring reading speed is the dominant assessment of fluency, but fast reading does not always mean fluent reading. Some students including those who speak languages other than English may read at slower rates and therefore goal setting for prosody and accuracy rather than speed will be of greater importance (Dowd & Bartlett, 2019).

Student self-assessment

Student/teacher discussions can support students to self-assess their reading fluency. Students can record themselves in repeated reading of a text and decide which read sounded more fluent. A co-constructed rubric targeting accuracy, rate and prosody and

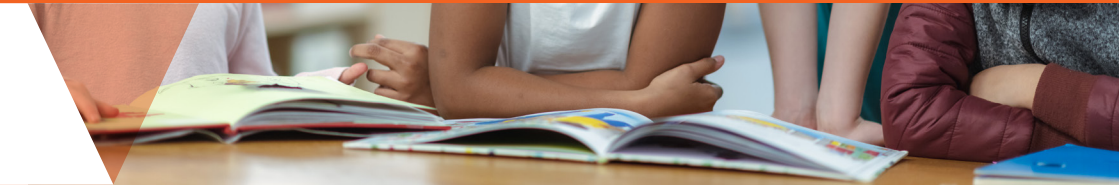
suited to the year level can help students with this process. For example:

- **Accuracy:** I read (all, most, some) of the words correctly.
- **Rate:** I read (all, most, some) wof the words like I was talking (not too fast and not too slow).
- **Prosody:** I paused at (all, most, some) of the full stops.
- **Prosody:** I raised my pitch for (all, some, most) questions.

Assessing fluency

The English Online Interview (EOI) is a useful starting point when considering the reading fluency of students in Foundation to Grade 2. Teacher judgement used to assess fluency is guided by use of descriptive passages which provide information about phrasing, expression, stress, pacing and attention to punctuation. Commercially produced assessments can be used and will provide a count of words read per minute and the opportunity for norm-referencing. However, listening to a student reading aloud is a powerful formative assessment because it helps determine if further explicit teaching and assessment are necessary.

Teachers may refer to [Literacy tests and what they assess](#) to find examples of assessment tools with an oral fluency focus.



Suggestions for further discussion

Whole-school processes and procedures

1. What do we currently have in place to monitor students' reading fluency? Is it satisfactory? Why? Why not?
2. What opportunities do we have for students to read aloud to different audiences? (For example, reading at assemblies, reading to younger year levels, poetry or short story reading over the loudspeaker before recess etc.)
3. How do we engage our school community to understand the importance of reading fluency?

Teacher professional development

1. Record students' reading of an age-appropriate text. Use the recording for teacher moderation of fluency. Which students do we agree are at, above or below standard?
2. Fluent reading does not guarantee comprehension. What are the implications for teaching related to this statement?
3. How do we define quality fluency teaching instruction?
4. Work with colleagues to determine where prosody can be addressed within a selected passage of text.

Oral reading fluency and our students

1. Which students find fluency challenging? How do we know they are finding fluency challenging?
2. What targeted interventions can be put in place to support these students?
3. What texts can we use to teach and assess fluency, and should these be the same for all students who find fluency difficult?
4. What opportunities can we create for our fluent readers to extend time spent reading continuous texts, across a variety of genres and topics?



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