

Building Fluency

What is fluency?:

“The ability to read smoothly, easily, and readily with freedom from word recognition problems.” Dictionary of Reading and Related Terms

Fluency includes: phrasing, expression, emphasis, automaticity, pace

Fluency improves comprehension because students are able to pay attention to the punctuation, bold words, emotions of the character, dialogue – and not just focus on pronouncing the words correctly.



What interferes with fluency?:

- Lack of word recognition skills
- Word by word reading. Pointing to keep a one-to-one correspondence is fine with early levels A-C. But it starts to interfere with fluency after level C. If needed, transition to sliding finger under text. Then drop the finger and just use occasionally for problem solving.
- Too much repetition (going back over words or phrases)
- Lack of practice or exposure to reading
- Trying to read difficult text.

Ideas:

1. Conduct shared reading experiences (students join in on repeated phrases).
2. Listen to stories (tape, CD, ipad, etc.).
3. Use poems and songs.
4. Practice sight word fluency.
5. Practice reading short phrases made up of common sight words (to the park, at the zoo).
6. Practice drills with high frequency syllables (-tion, -ment, etc.).
7. Practice choral and echo reading of text with a partner: Choral reading – sync voices together as you read text in unison. Echo reading – adult reads a sentence or short passage to model fluent reading, then students echo (read).
8. Eliminate round-robin reading. Try these instead:
 - Students are paired up and each takes turn reading a page or paragraph.
 - Take turns reading dialogue – trying to sound like the character they are reading.
9. Student reads familiar passage of text (at independent level) and rereads several times to improve fluency. Use a whisper phone to listen to self.
10. Reader’s Theater and Choral Reading: Try Mary Ann Hoberman’s book series “You Read to Me, I’ll Read to You.” These are catchy fun stories in poem form for 2 voices.

Teaching Strategies:

1. Model fluent reading with daily read alouds.
2. After a student has stopped to figure out a word, remind them to go back and reread the sentence once it is figured out: "Go back and read the whole sentence. Now that you know all the words, reread it to make it sound smooth."
3. To encourage phrasing and reading less like a robot: Teach students to phrase by "scooping up" a few words together at a time. You will need to model those phrases (in the park, at the zoo, going to play, etc.) and use a scoop or pinch hand gesture to remind them.
4. To pay attention to punctuation, look ahead to the end of the sentence. Notice the end mark. Model how you stop for a period (take a breath). Show how your voice might rise at the end for a question. Read with expression when an exclamation mark is shown.
5. When a sentence continues to a new line, model how to keep reading until you reach the ending punctuation.
6. Other punctuation matters too – such as commas.
 - Let's eat, Grandma. vs. Let's eat Grandma.
 - "David," said Mother. "Please come here." Vs. David said, "Mother, please come here."
 - He ate ham burgers and cheese. Vs. He ate ham, burgers, and cheese.
7. Pay attention to special words (bold, italics, and those which need emphasis). Model how to read these when they come up in texts.
8. Practice reading dialogue. Choose a story or book with conversation. Look for the quotation marks to know where to start and stop reading. Students read the character's parts without using the words "said the Little Red Hen." Practice speaking in the same tone the character would be using. Dialogue and narrator parts should sound differently.
9. Model how the mood or emotion of the character should change how you read their part. Practice making your voice sound happy, mad, sad, excited, nervous, scared, etc.
10. Teach students to pay attention to *how* the character is talking: whispered, yelled, growled, smiled, laughed, pleaded, etc.

The above strategies are outlined in Goal #4: Teaching Fluency from The Reading Strategies Book: Your Everything Guide to Developing Skilled Readers, by Jennifer Serravallo, Heinemann Publishers, 2015