



Oral Reading Fluency

Parent Handout

What is Oral Reading Fluency?

Reading fluency is the ability to read quickly and easily. It means that a child can recognize and decode words accurately and automatically and understand the words as they are being read. Children who do not read fluently (choppy readers) have to work hard on the mechanics of reading that there's no mental energy left to think about the meaning of what they are reading.

How do I know if my child is reading fluently?

A simple way to know if your child is reading fluently is to listen to him/her read grade level text aloud. Have your child read a paragraph from his/her social studies, science or reading book. As your child reads consider the following:

- How many words does he/she struggle with?
- How easily is he/she sounding out an unknown word?
- Is he/she reading with expression? (for example, pausing at commas, periods, etc.)
- Can he/she retell the story or summarize what the paragraph/story was about?

Many schools test students' oral reading fluency skills as a way to screen for possible reading difficulties. Your child may be asked to read a grade level passage for one minute. The teacher will then calculate the "words correct per minute" (wcpm). Children who have strong word recognition skills and can quickly use word attack strategies when coming upon an unknown word are able to read grade level text at an appropriate rate for that grade.

How can I help my child read fluently?

To help your child develop reading fluency:

- Model fluent reading. Provide opportunities when your child can hear you read aloud. Be sure to read with expression pausing appropriately at punctuation marks and changing voice for characters.
- Teach your child high frequency sight words. High frequency sight words are words that readers are encouraged to recognize without having to sound them out. It is estimated that the first 100 sight words account for approximately 50% of what we read. Words such as "the", "and" and "he" are considered high frequency sight words. These words can be practiced on flashcards. As you and your child read, point out the sight words in the story. Some children are able to identify the words on flashcards; however, this skill does not transfer to reading. Pointing them out as you read helps in transferring to reading the words in books.
- When having your child practice reading aloud, help your child choose books at his/her independent reading level. Use the 5-finger rule as a guide. This means that a child shouldn't struggle with more than 5 words on a page.
- Repeated reading has proven to be one of the best strategies for developing reading fluency. Children should be provided with many opportunities to read the same passage (or story) orally several times. It is best if the adult reads the passage (paragraph, story) first and then has the child read and re-read the same text. Typically reading the text 4 times is suggested when focusing on improving fluency skills.

