

What is Reading Fluency?

Reading fluency is the ability to read text accurately and quickly. When fluent readers read, they recognize words automatically. They group words quickly to help them gain meaning. Fluent readers read aloud effortlessly and with expression. Their reading sounds natural, as if they are speaking. Readers who have not yet developed fluency read slowly, word by word. Their oral reading is choppy.

Why does my child need this skill?

Reading fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Because fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding the words, they can focus their attention on what the text means. Readers who are weak in reading fluency read slowly, word by word, focusing on decoding words instead of understanding the meaning of what they read. In conclusion, children who read fluently are more likely to enjoy reading and are also able to understand what they read.

Things you can do at home to help:

There are several skills that help children read fluently, such as paying attention to punctuation, grouping words into meaningful chunks, and using expression. Fluency also requires children to use strategies to decode unfamiliar words and to know a lot of sight words that can't be "sounded out." Below is a list of things you can do at home to help improve your child's reading fluency. **Please keep in mind that books used to practice fluency skills should be easy for your child to read.**

One way for children to become more fluent readers is by recognizing more words by sight. Certain words, such as "was" and "the" have to be recognized by sight because they can't be sounded out or decoded. So the first step towards improving fluency should be memorizing the most common sight words.

Create or buy flashcards from the lists of common sight words. Have your child practice the words. An effective way to study the words is to go through the cards one at a time and have your child say the word, spell it and say it again. Other activities you can do with the flashcards might include playing Memory or any other type of game. Also, you can have your child spell out the sight words using magnetic letters.

In addition to knowing sight words, fluent readers do a lot of rereading. **Rereading** a familiar text allows children to focus on punctuation, inflection and understanding as opposed to just sounding out or decoding new words. When the text is easy, children can read more quickly and gain more confidence. Much like young children learn from hearing the same story over and over, older children learn from reading the same story over and over.

Listening to other fluent readers also helps children become more fluent themselves. When you read to your child, point out your thinking: why you paused for the period, or how you knew which word came next. Model what fluent readers do!

Another way children can improve their fluency is by choosing a story to read and work at for the entire week. While having your child read the passage, set the timer for one minute. When the one minute is up mark where your child ended, then count the number of words they read correctly. Help your child set a realistic goal, (2-3 words) to improve when they reread the passage the next day. Repeat every few days and acknowledge the improvement your child is making.