

What Is Reading Fluency?

How correctly levelled repeated reading helps children become smoother, more confident readers

Reading fluency is the bridge between decoding and comprehension. A fluent reader can recognise words accurately, read at an appropriate pace, group words into meaningful phrases, and use expression while still thinking about what the text means.

Fluency Includes

- Accuracy: reading the words correctly, not guessing from pictures or context.
- Automaticity: recognising taught words and patterns with less effort.
- Pace: reading at a steady rate that matches the child and the text.
- Phrasing and expression: reading in meaningful groups so it sounds like language.
- Understanding: keeping enough mental energy available to think about meaning.

Fluency Is Not Just Speed

- Fast reading with errors is not fluent reading.
- A child should not be pushed to read faster than their accuracy allows.
 - The goal is accurate, smooth, expressive reading with understanding.

Why Some Children Read Slowly

- Decoding is still taking too much effort.
- The text includes too many untaught spelling patterns or tricky words.
- The child is reading word-by-word instead of in phrases.
- Anxiety or low confidence makes reading aloud feel stressful.
- The child has not had enough successful practice with the same words and patterns.

What Correct Level Means

- The text is mostly made from patterns the child has been explicitly taught.
- The child can read it with high accuracy and only a small amount of support.
- The text feels achievable, not overwhelming.
- The level allows practice to build confidence rather than reinforce guessing.

How Repeated Reading Improves Fluency

1. First Read

The child focuses on accuracy. The adult supports decoding, self-correction, and understanding of the text.

2. Reread

The same passage becomes more familiar. Less effort is spent on individual words, so reading becomes smoother.

3. Build Confidence

With practice at the right level, the child can add phrasing, expression, pace, and better comprehension.

Helpful Practice at Home

Short, calm, successful practice is best. Reread a correctly levelled passage 2-4 times across a week. Over these sessions gradually lengthen the amount of text practised (from a sentence/paragraph/page to a paragraph/page/chapter).

Praise accuracy, self-correction, smoother phrasing, and effort. Stop before the task becomes frustrating. Repeated reading should never mean memorising a book that is too hard. It works best when the text is matched to the child's current decoding skills and gradually increases as new patterns are taught.