TOWN END
RESEARCH SCHOOL
At WISE Academies

The Fluency
Handbook





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What do we mean by fluency?

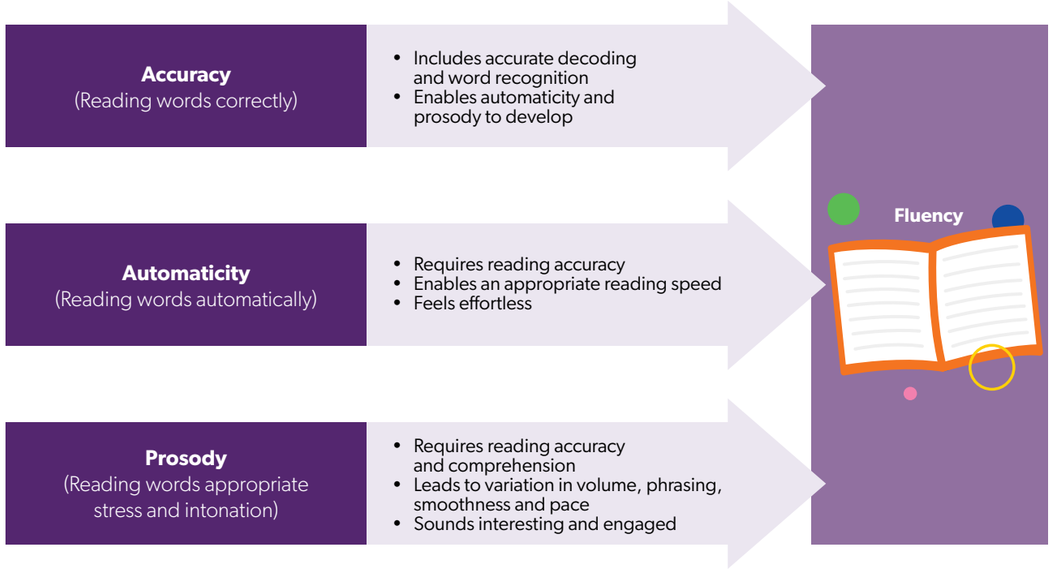
Fluency is the bridge between decoding and comprehension. At one end, fluency connects to accuracy and automaticity in decoding. At the other end, it connects to comprehension through prosody or expressive interpretation. Fluent reading supports comprehension because student's cognitive resources are freed from focusing on word recognition and can be redirected towards comprehending the text.

Fluency comprises of 3 parts:

Accuracy *(words read accurately and with correct pronunciation)*
- Students use context to support them in accurately reading homographs (There is no time like the present to present a friend with a present.)

Automaticity *(rapid word recognition without conscious decoding)*
- Students are able to recognise words quickly, accurately and without effort: whole word recognition.
- Student's cognitive resources can attend almost entirely to reading comprehension.

Prosody *(appropriate use of phrasing and expression)*
- Students demonstrate appropriate intonation, rhythm and emphasis to words and sentences when reading out loud.
- Student's prosody can demonstrate understanding and the extent that they have read for meaning.
- Prosody is a signal that the text has been comprehended.



'Improving Literacy in KS2', EEF Guidance Report

What can we learn from the evidence about reading fluency?

- Fluent readers read whole words. Research tells us that this is how most adults read.
- When we have seen and read a word many times, it is stored in long term memory as a unique letter string and can be read instantly. This process is referred to as 'orthographic mapping' (Ehri, 2015).
- Words have three forms – their **sounds** (phonemes), their **orthography** (spelling) and their **meaning**.
- Orthographic mapping is the process that successful readers use to become fluent. Readers use the oral language processing part of their brain to connect the sounds/phonemes of words they already know to the letters/graphemes in a word. They then permanently store the connected sounds and letters of words - along with their meaning - as instantly recognisable words.
- Expert readers recognise familiar written words rapidly and automatically. They map the sounds & spellings directly to their meanings without the need for decoding.
- After approximately one to four exposures to a written word, the word becomes unitised or instantly familiar (Kilpatrick, 2015).

Why teach fluency?

- When pupils are fluent readers they have more attention available for the work of comprehension, understanding and learning from what is being read.
- Fluency instruction provides reading experience, pupils develop a larger repertoire of words they recognise at a glance (rather than sounding out). The representations of individual words/letter groups get stronger and more reliable the more they meet them.
- Familiarity with the subject matter increases fluency, broadens vocabulary and allows for deeper comprehension, so teaching fluency through non-fiction texts, enables more subjects to become familiar to all.
- Fluency instruction improves oral reading fluency and silent reading fluency.
- Fluency instruction is inclusive and promotes collaboration and shared experiences for all learners irrespective of home language, proficiency etc.
- Fluency instruction boosts confidence and engagement which leads to success which in turn increases motivation to read.
- Listening to an expert adult read aloud with prosody, demonstrates how to infuse written words with meaning. Pupils need to hear it in order to emulate it.
- Use of prosody signals levels of understanding and whether meaning has been extracted and the text has been comprehended.

Structures for effective fluency instruction

Fluency is critical to success in reading. Unfortunately, it is not always fully taught. Fluency doesn't just happen by chance; it needs explicit teaching. Techniques such as round-robin or popcorn reading – where pupils are randomly chosen to read aloud without affording time to practise – can lead to anxiety and embarrassment for some pupils. Equally, listening to peers' choppy, disjointed reading does little to improve reading or aid comprehension. Several important structures need to be in place to teach fluency successfully.

1. Providing adequate curriculum time

Invest time in teaching fluency so that reading becomes accurate, automatic, and pupils can read words effortlessly. Fluency is often described as part of the big five aspects of reading along with phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary and text comprehension. But fluency is also often recognised as a neglected aspect of reading.

2. Selecting quality texts

Picking suitable texts is critical. Consider each text's potential for developing fluency and use a balance of genres, including non-fiction and poetry.

3. Targeted groupings

Grouping pupils is often more of an art than a science, but it helps to consider pupils' relationships with each other, their personalities, and their level of patience and tolerance! For fluency instruction, pairings or triads work best. One example could be to pair:

- Strongest readers paired with confident readers.
- Very confident readers paired with developing readers.

Pupils with special educational needs to join a pair to form a triad. This way, children can learn with and from one another. It is good to keep groupings fluid and provide children with opportunities to work with a range of people.

4. Regular routines

Routines help to create a supportive, positive classroom environment. Within their pairs or triads, it's helpful to establish a partner A – the more fluent reader and a partner B – the less fluent reader. If there's a Partner C, they would be the least fluent. Whilst the adult reads, it's useful for partner A to track the text with a **FOLLOWING FINGER** for their pair or triad, who will follow with their **MAGNET EYES**. Partner A would be the partner to read first during paired or triad reading so that they can model good reading. Finally, ensuring everyone can easily see the text seems obvious but is easily overlooked.

5. Expert modelling

Pupils must hear how a text sounds when it is brought to life through fluent reading. Prosody, like language, is usually acquired as children grow and listen to expert readers around them. Listening to an adult read

Structures for effective fluency instruction continued

aloud with prosody – using appropriate stress, intonation, volume, phrasing, smoothness and pace – demonstrates to children how to give meaning to the written words on the page. Prosody is the music and deep sense we infuse when reading the words aloud; children need to hear this so that they can emulate it. To improve pupils' rapid word recognition, it helps if pupils follow their copy of the text, seeing the words on the paper as they hear them read aloud in context.

Ultimately, our goal is to develop fluent, independent readers. And to do that, we scaffold pupils' reading through a gradual release of responsibility from (1) teacher modelling, (2) choral or echo reading together, (3) paired reading, (4) independent reading.

6. Repeated readings

Meeting new and unfamiliar texts is difficult. Children must grapple with new vocabulary and navigate complex layouts and text structures. Pupils also need sufficient background knowledge to make sense of what they read. Reading a text once – or wide reading - is rarely enough to support fluency. Repeated readings – or deep reading – allows pupils to rehearse, refine and hone their reading. Over time, repetition increases fluency and boosts comprehension. Pupils will also learn to transfer their fluency to reading new, unseen texts.

7. Focussed feedback

To give quality, precise and targeted feedback that directly improves fluency, we must understand the features of fluent reading. Using a rubric or fluency scale (see page 9) helps us spot gaps and provide feedback, identifying what improvements need to be made.

Peer feedback is also valuable. Children can learn from and with one another by giving structured, expert feedback. Child-friendly versions of fluency scales are available and, if used well, can be incredibly effective. Activating pupils as learning resources for one another is powerful, and it can also lead to pupils being more metacognitive about their learning.

8. Motivation

A social or shared experience of a text is a powerful platform to develop positive attitudes and build positive self-concepts. All children must experience success. Using the gradual release of responsibility model, children hear fluent reading from multiple readers, and are given the time to practice and repeat. Success grows confidence, which in turn increases motivation. Assisted or supported repeated reading is great for improving fluency, motivation and confidence.

And finally

Selecting great activities through which to teach fluency is also important (see strategies on page 8).

What does fluency instruction look like?

Fluency must be explicitly taught and deliberately practiced. This can be done through the following strategies:

Fluency Strategies	
Teacher-led modelled fluent reading	Pupils hear how a text sounds when read fluently and can identify what aspects of fluency were used. Prosody (like language) is usually acquired naturally as children grow and listen to prosody being modelled around them. Much infant directed language is rich in prosody. Hearing an adult read aloud with expression or appropriate prosody demonstrates to children how to give meaning to what is read through varied pitch (frequency), intensity (specific emphasis on a syllable), and duration (length of the word and pauses between words).
Choral reading	This involves simultaneous reading of a passage and can be done individually, in groups or as a whole class. In choral reading sessions it is important to monitor children's reading to ensure that all children are participating. One way of doing this is to invite different groups of children mid-flow to read aloud, for example, girls, boys, people with blue eyes, people on a specific table etc.
Repeated choral reading	The teacher might lower their voice with each repeated reading thus phasing themselves out - gradually releasing responsibility to the students.
Echo reading	The teacher reads a short section of the text aloud while the students silently follow in their own copies of the text. This section could be a sentence, paragraph or a short passage. Students echo the section back. Sections need to be long enough so that students are required to rely on reading their text and not just remembering what the teacher said. The teacher then releases responsibility to pairs of children - partner reading. Partner A (the stronger reader in the pair) will then read the same piece of text and partner B will track the text and monitor their partner. The pairs then swap - partner B reads and partner A tracks and monitors.
Deep reading	Occurs when a student is asked individually to read a single text repeatedly until a level of fluency is achieved. This may be silently or out loud. Several reviews of research on fluency have shown that word recognition accuracy, automaticity, comprehension, and attitude toward reading have been shown to improve with repeated readings.
Performance read	Texts that feature monologues, dialogues, speeches, songs, or any text that can be voiced by students. They can discuss the text and make decisions about how to use their voices, facial expressions, and gestures. Text marking can be used to show what different aspects of the reading sounds like e.g. underlining a phrase/word/part of the word that will be stressed when read out loud. This is a really crucial strategy. It's a way to make repeated reading purposeful and fun. Some examples of performance reading are: readers theatre, performance poetry, presenting speeches, jingles, stories, songs, explanations, playscripts etc.

How can we assess reading fluency?

	A - Accuracy & rate	P - Pausing & phrasing	E - Expression & intonation	S - Smoothness
4	• Consistently reads at conversational pace; appropriate rate throughout reading. • Recognises errors and self-corrects appropriately. • Number of words correct per minute (WCPM) meets requirement*.	• Reads with good phrasing, mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to punctuation. • Groups words into meaningful phrases reflecting natural speech patterns and pausing sounds natural.	• Reads with good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text. • Varies expression and volume to match their interpretation of the passage. • Reading sounds confident and natural.	• Reads smoothly with some breaks, but resolves word and structure difficulties quickly, usually through self-correction.
3	• Reads with an uneven mixture of fast and slow pace. • Usually recognises errors and self-corrects appropriately • Number of words correct per minute (WCPM) meets requirement*.	• Reads with a mixture of run-ons, mid sentence pauses for breath and some choppiness, reasonable stress and intonation. • Usually pays attention to punctuation.	• Makes text sound like natural speech throughout most of the passage. • Mostly stresses appropriate words. • Voice volume is generally appropriate throughout the text.	• Occasionally breaks smooth rhythm because of difficulties with specific words and/or structures.
2	• Reads moderately slowly. • Rarely recognises errors and rarely self corrects. • Number of words correct per minute (WCPM) is below requirement*.	• Frequently reads in two and three-word phrases, giving the impression of choppy reading. • Improper use of stress and intonation. • Often fails to mark ends of sentences and clauses.	• Begins to use voice to make text sound like natural language in some areas of the text but not consistently. • Focus remains largely on pronouncing the word. • Volume doesn't change to reflect interpretation of the passage.	• Experiences several 'rough spots' in text where extended pauses or hesitations are more frequent and disruptive.
1	• Reads slowly and laboriously. • Fails to recognise errors/self-correct. • Number of words correct per minute (WCPM) is well below requirement*.	• Reads in a monotone with little sense of boundaries. • Frequently reads word by word - staccato style	• Reads words as if simply to get them out. • Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural speech.	• Makes frequent extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound outs, repetitions and/or multiple attempts.

How can we assess reading fluency?

A - Accuracy & rate	P - Pausing & phrasing	E - Expression & intonation	S - Smoothness
/4	/4	/4	/4
Total score /16			

The APES total scores will range from 4 to 16.

Here are some score ranges to give you a sense of your students' performance:

Score of 4–6: Student is underperforming in fluency levels
Score of 7–11: Student is approaching year group norms of fluency
Score of 12–16: Student is on or above year group norms in fluency

How to use the Fluency Scale

Each section of APES is measured by students reading one text. Choose the score that best fits and is the closest match to the choices in the scale.

* For the "A" in apes (Accuracy & rate), a simple protocol for assessing rate, or words correct per minute (WCPM) can also be used. The basic steps are listening to a child read a text of 100 – 200 words at age-appropriate level for one minute. While the student reads, the adult keeps tracks of errors and counts the number of words read correctly in one minute. *Compare the score against the norms in the table below (Rasinski & Padak, 2005).

Students who generally score within the ranges indicated in the table can be considered to be making adequate progress in fluency. Students near the lower end or below the ranges indicated in the table below should be considered for fluency intervention. Students scoring above the ranges in the table may be reading too quickly to comprehend the text adequately.

Target Oral Fluency Ranges as Measured by Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) Reading an age-appropriate text (Rasinski & Padak, 2005)

Year	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Year 2		20 - 50	30 - 90
Year 3	30 - 80	50 - 100	70 - 130
Year 4	50 - 110	70 - 120	80 - 140
Year 5	70 - 120	80 - 130	90 - 140
Year 6	80 - 130	90 - 140	100 - 150
Year 7	90 - 140	100 - 150	110 - 160
Year 8	100 - 150	110 - 160	120 - 170
Year 9	110 - 160	120 - 180	130 - 180

KS1 peer and self-assessment



A

Accurate word recognition & pace

1	2	3	4
Pace is too slow.	Words are not read automatically.	Pace is too fast - does not sound like natural speech.	Reads words automatically and fixes mistakes.



P

Pausing, phrasing & rhythm

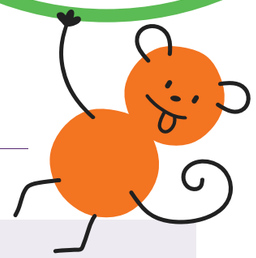
1	2	3	4
Reading is choppy.	Reads words in awkward chunks.	Reads with few or no pauses.	Reads with rhythm, phrase by phrase and fixes mistakes.

E

Expression

1	2	3	4
Reads with no expression.	Reads with a little expression.	Reads with too much expression.	Reads with the right amount of expression.

KS2 peer and self-assessment



A

Accuracy & Rate

Reading fluently: I read fluently and smoothly, recognising words effortlessly at the correct pace and fixing mistakes immediately when they occur.

1	2	3	4
I struggle with reading because I do not automatically recognise words. This makes my reading slow and reliant on sounding out my words.	I can be slow at reading because I only recognise some words at a glance and often need to sound them out, which affects the flow of my reading.	I read most words accurately and at a glance I can maintain a good pace, but sometimes struggle with longer unfamiliar words.	I read most words at a glance, smoothly and effortlessly, rarely needing to sound them out or struggle.

P

Pausing & Phrasing

Reading fluently: I read phrase by phrase, paying attention to the punctuation.

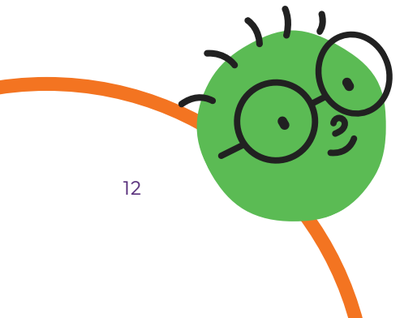
1	2	3	4
I read word by word, or one word at a time, like a robot. I read slowly and don't notice phrases.	Sometimes I read 2 or 3 words at a time. Sometimes I read word by word like a robot. My reading is choppy.	I mostly group words into meaningful phrases. I am getting better at pausing where it sounds natural.	I group words into meaningful phrases, reflecting how we naturally pause in speech.

E

Expression & Intonation

Reading fluently: I read with expression so that it sounds confident and natural. Watch your tone, pitch, stress and volume!

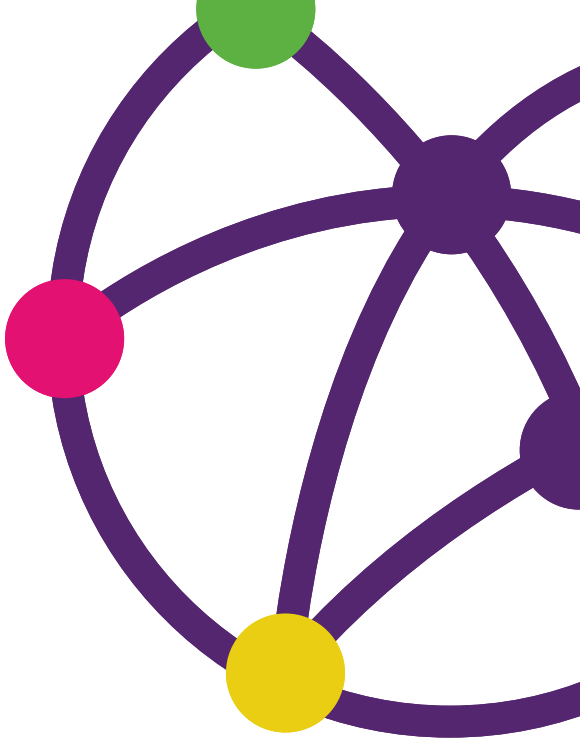
1	2	3	4
My reading lacks expression and doesn't really make sense because I don't vary my tone or pitch. I read in a monotone manner.	I am trying to vary my tone and pitch, but I sometimes forget and my reading does not sound confident.	I read with varied tone and pitch most of the time. I try to stress key words. My reading sounds confident and natural.	I always read with appropriate expression. I sound confident and natural. I read like I talk in conversations.



Considering text potential

It is important to consider how a text may extend pupils' reading comprehension capabilities: too easy and pupils do not need to use the strategies, too hard and they cannot understand the text. When considering an effective but not overwhelming challenge, the following may be useful to address:

VOCABULARY * Useful words that children can use in their own speech or writing * Technical vocabulary that they may encounter in other disciplines * Words with multiple meanings * Use of slang * Interesting or unusual words * Words that cultivate word consciousness * What emotional response do the word choices elicit?	**PURPOSE & INTENDED AUDIENCE** * Why was the text written? * Who is it aimed at? * What value judgements are implied? * Persuade (propaganda, bias, values etc.) * Inform *Entertain * Discuss	**HISTORICAL & CULTURAL** * What archaic vocabulary will be met? * Is the context recognisable to the children? * Do they have background knowledge to activate? * Are pupils able to make connections?
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL * Will they explore a variety of conflicts, behaviours, problems or dilemmas faced by characters? * Will pupils experience or meet a range of emotions? * Will the book change or influence thinking?	**BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE** * Text: self - links with their personal values and life experiences * Text: text - links to other texts, genres and authors * Text: world - links to facts, other disciplines and the real world	**SUBJECT** * Is the subject knowledge familiar or will it extend knowledge? * Is it likely to interest the children? * Are there opportunities to integrate reading sessions with the wider curriculum? * Are issues thoughtfully/ sensitively presented? * Does the text appeal to you?
LANGUAGE FEATURES * Register - level of formality * Speech - direct and indirect * Standard/non-standard English	**FIGURATIVE DEVICES** * Simile * Repetition * Metaphor * Personification * Alliteration * Sensory imagery * Pun * Idioms	**VISUAL FEATURES** * Illustration, colour, shape, layout, medium, line, composition, typography, point of view, position, size, perspective, framing
GRAMMAR & SYNTAX * Sentence structure * Punctuation	**THEME** * What themes can be identified in the text? * Will the themes be easily identified and understood? * Does the text carry a deeper meaning (e.g. loss, triumph over adversity, redemption, justice, relationships)?	**NARRATIVE FEATURES** * Time shifts, narration (dual, first/ second person), plot, setting, character, flashbacks
COHERENCE * How easy is it to follow the text when reading? * How easy is it to integrate information between sentences and paragraphs (local coherence)? * How accessible are the concepts to the children - do they have the knowledge and experiences to fill in any gaps in the text (global coherence)?	**GENRE** * A range of genres - non-fiction, poetry, fiction and multimodal forms * Texts that present information in a variety of ways - diagrams, maps, charts, captions, graphic organisers, photographs	**DIVERSITY** * Diverse range of authors and illustrators * Will children see themselves reflected in what they read? * Do they have the opportunity to investigate other lives, worlds and perspectives? * Will the book change or influence thinking?



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