

# Reading fluency

## 4A – Read with fluency and provide opportunities for pupils to practise theirs

Read this sentence from a source in a past **GCSE English Language Paper 2** and consider the challenges:



*The wind had blown a gale all night, and I had been hourly expecting that the tumbling storm shaken old steamship, in which I had taken passage to Patagonia, would turn over once and for all and settle down beneath the tremendous tumult of waters.*

This is the first sentence of the article. A struggling reader working their way through this sentence will be working hard on the different elements that follow.

### Challenges:

- the name of an unfamiliar place;
- polysyllabic words;
- pronunciation of unfamiliar words;
- the meaning of 'gale' and 'tumult';
- its length;
- syntax;
- multiple clauses;
- number of phrases, each adding a layer of complexity.

When they have to do this for multiple sentences, across a larger text, there is very little cognitive energy left over for comprehension: this is what fluency strategies try to combat.



# Reading fluency



Fluency refers to reading accurately, with automaticity, and appropriate prosody.

- **Accuracy:** reading words correctly, including decoding and word recognition
- **Automaticity:** reading words automatically, which supports reading speed
- **Prosody:** reading the appropriate emphasis and intonation

Therefore, if we can improve pupils' reading fluency, making these elements more intuitive, even effortless, then pupils should have more cognitive energy left for comprehension.

There are **four core strategies** in the deliberate practice and development of reading fluency:

1. Modelled fluent reading
2. Text marking
3. Echo reading
4. Paired reading

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Reading fluency



# Reading fluency

## 1. Modelled fluent reading

The teacher reads the text with expression, prosody, and clear pronunciation.

## 2. Text marking

This strategy is designed to help pupils break down the different parts of a sentence, clauses and phrases – beyond punctuation.

Text marking has many benefits:

- firstly, it encourages pupils to re-read sentences, and consider the different sub-sections and their meanings.
- Secondly, it encourages pupils to consider emphasis, and therefore the importance of certain words or phrases. It reminds them about the importance of punctuation and some of its function in aiding comprehension.

There are multiple symbols, or marks, teachers could use with classes, but it is sensible to focus on the below to begin with.

Text marking	What to do while reading
/	Short pause
//	Long pause
<u>Underline a word or phrase</u>	Emphasise the word or phrase (alter volume, tone, pitch)

The sentence at the start of this article might then look like this:



*The wind had blown /a gale all night,/ and I had been hourly expecting /that the tumbling storm shaken old steamship,/ in which I had taken passage to Patagonia, /would turn over once and for all/ and settle down/beneath the tremendous tumult of waters.*

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## 3. Echo reading

Echo reading, or choral reading, is done after the teacher has modelled a fluent reading of a given text.

Choosing either individual phrases, clauses or sentences, the teacher then reads the text aloud again, asking the class to repeat the reading back with the same style, intonation and emphasis.

The teacher can adjust the quantity they read based on class performance and the complexity of the text.

This strategy allows the teacher to monitor the reading within the class, re-model and feedback where appropriate, and give further opportunities to repeat back. As the whole class are reading at the same time, it should reduce individual fears over reading aloud.

## 4. Paired reading

It is important for pupils to practise their reading repeatedly – since practice makes secure.

With an anxious and tired looking Year 8 class, one can imagine how difficult it might be, and inappropriate, to thrust individual performance upon them. However, with carefully thought through pairings in a well-crafted seating plan, paired reading allows pupils to practise their reading multiple times.

Research suggests that the more this is practiced, the more pupils are able to transfer these reading skills to new texts.

The above strategies lend themselves well to subjects like English, where reading aloud feels natural for poems and plays.

In other subjects like Science, these approaches would likely be adapted.

Rather than echo reading a whole section of a text for example, we might focus on the polysyllabic technical words (eg photosynthesis, endothermic) that are so intrinsic to successful reading within the discipline.

