



Reading Fluency at Greenleys Junior School

What is fluency?

'Fluency is reading with and for meaning, and any instruction that focuses primarily on speed with minimal regard for meaning is wrong,' (Rasinski, T. - 2012).

Reading fluency can be defined as reading with accuracy (reading words correctly), automaticity (reading words at an appropriate speed without great effort) and prosody (appropriate stress and intonation).



These three key elements of fluency are important skills in isolation, but they also work as interdependent building blocks. If one building block isn't secure, then reading fluency is difficult to achieve. For example, a pupil might struggle with automaticity if they are not decoding accurately. Similarly, effective prosody is reliant upon pupils being able to read words automatically, with ease and appropriate pace, if a text is to be brought alive with expression.

Why is fluency important?

Fluent reading supports reading comprehension. When pupils read fluently, their cognitive resources can be redirected from focusing on decoding and onto comprehending the text. For this reason, fluency is sometimes described as a bridge from word recognition to comprehension.

Tim Shanahan (2019) says we need to teach reading fluency because it helps pupils to understand how print works, how to develop and consolidate automatic decoding skills, and how to bring a text to life from print to prosody.

Most pupils will benefit from an emphasis on the explicit teaching of fluency as part of a multi-faceted approach to teaching reading. However, it is important to start with identifying pupils' capabilities and accurately diagnosing areas where they may need further instruction. For instance, some pupils may benefit from additional support beyond whole-class teaching.

A fluency scale rubric, like the one adapted from Zutell and Rasinski (1991), is a useful tool to support with this:

	Expression and volume	Phrasing	Smoothness	Pace
4	Reads with <i>good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text</i> . Varies expression and volume to match his or her interpretation of the passage.	Generally reads with <i>good phrasing</i> , mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to expression.	<i>Generally reads smoothly</i> with some breaks, but resolves word and structure difficulties quickly, usually through self-correction.	Consistently reads at <i>conversational pace</i> ; appropriate rate throughout reading.
3	Make text sound like <i>natural language</i> throughout the better part of the passage. Occasionally slips into expressionless reading. Voice volume is generally appropriate throughout the text.	Reads with a <i>mixture of run-ons</i> , mid sentence pauses for breath, and some choppiness, reasonable stress and intonation.	<i>Occasionally breaks smooth rhythm</i> because of difficulties with specific words and/or structures.	Reads with an <i>uneven mixture of fast and slow pace</i> .
2	<i>Begins to use voice to make text sound like natural language</i> in some areas of the text but not in others. Focus remains largely on pronouncing the word. Still reads in a quiet voice.	Frequently reads in two- and three-word phrases, giving the impression of <i>choppy reading</i> ; improper stress and intonation fail to mark ends of sentences and clauses.	Experiences <i>several 'rough spots'</i> in text where extended pauses or hesitations are more frequent and disruptive.	Reads <i>moderately slowly</i> .
1	<i>Reads words as if simply to get them out</i> . Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural language.	Reads in a <i>monotone</i> with little sense of boundaries; frequently reads <i>word-by-word</i> .	Makes frequent <i>extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound outs, repetitions, and/or multiple attempts</i> .	Reads <i>slowly and laboriously</i> .

How might this translate to the classroom at Greenleys Junior School?

One evidence-informed approach is guided oral reading instruction. This involves an adult modelling the fluent reading of a text first and then pupils reading the same text aloud with appropriate feedback. It is an opportunity to make the implicit explicit by expertly modelling fluency through appropriate use of pace, expression, punctuation and phrasing – all important features of effective prosody. Another approach to consider is repeated reading. This involves pupils re-reading a short text a set number of times or until they reach a suitable level of fluency. It is a great way to develop accuracy and automaticity when encountering complex tier 2 and 3 vocabulary in a subject with complex language like science. At GJS, this happens as part of the RWI sessions.

Children are given opportunity during English lessons to practise and perform fluency strategies, such as repeated reading, paired reading, text marking for phrasing, and peer feedback. This also supports pupils' understanding of texts at the same time.

Ultimately, the goal of teaching reading is to enable children to comprehend written texts. To do this, pupils need to build both word reading and language comprehension skills. However, developing reading fluency can provide a crucial bridge between the two, continually supporting pupils' progression from learning to read to reading to learn. At GJS, children are given access to more complex vocabulary (studied and explained) as part of reading lessons, supported by the VIPERS approach.

Research taken from EEF documentation (Sarah Green)

Helping your child improve their reading fluency at home

In order to understand what they read, children must be able to *read fluently* whether they are reading aloud or silently. When reading aloud, fluent readers read in phrases and add intonation appropriately; their reading is smooth and has expression.

Children who do not read with fluency sound choppy and awkward. Those students may have difficulty with decoding skills or they may just need more practice with speed and smoothness in reading. Fluency is also important for motivation; children who find reading laborious tend not to want read!

Below you will find ways that you can help your child become a more fluent reader.

Choose the right books

Use the books your child brings home from school or books available from their reading range on myON. Books you read together with your child can be any book you enjoy 'reading for pleasure'.

Listen every day

Try and listen to your child read often. Be patient, offer help when your child gets stuck and always give lots of praise and encouragement.

Read it again

Encourage your child to reread favourite books, and make it fun! Repeated reading improves children's fluency and comprehension. They also provide opportunities to practice reading with expression. Children will enjoy giving the wolf a scary growl or using a squeaky little voice for a mouse.

Read together

Model your own fluent reading as you read and reread books with your child. Even though your child may be able to read on their own, continue to find time to read books that are just beyond their reading level. They will enjoy listening to more advanced stories, and will hear a great example of fluent reading. Reading books from different genres will help develop an appreciation of all book types.

Paired reading

Paired reading can mean alternating sentences while you read with your child, or reading aloud together. Just come up with a signal to indicate when your child wants to read a sentence by themselves or if they are stuck on a word.

Echo reading

Echo reading is a great strategy for children who have good technical reading skills but who struggle with expressiveness. If your child struggles to read with expression, try reading a section and then ask your child to 'echo' you, using the same intonations and emphasis you used.

Ask questions

Make sure your child understands what they are reading. You can encourage them to *retrieve* information (e.g. 'What has just happened?') or ask questions that *infer* meaning (e.g. 'Why do you think that character is hiding?')

Phonics

We use Read Write Inc. for phonics. Learn the sounds yourself so that you can help your child if they are struggling to read a word. You can help them to sound it out using the same phonics strategies used in school. You can always ask in school for help with this should you need it and there are videos to help parents on the Ruth Miskin website:

<https://www.ruthmiskin.com/parents/>