



---

## The Importance of Oral Reading Fluency

Lorraine van Zon, M.Ed., October 2002

Parents often question, "Should I be concerned if my child can read, but the reading is not fluent?" Current research states a definite "yes." Oral reading fluency seems to be a necessary condition for good comprehension and enjoyable reading experiences.

To work toward fluency in oral reading, it is important to know some of the qualities often found in most fluent oral readers:

- They usually use models of good reading at home and school to learn that fluent, expressive reading is the goal when reading aloud.
- They are given many opportunities to read aloud and are often reading texts at their instructional level and not at a level that is too difficult which only causes frustration.
- They also have more time to read silently to practice, rehearse, and hone intonation before they are asked to read aloud.

### Silent Reading vs. Oral Reading

Ultimately, children need to be competent and fluent silent readers, but being a fluent oral reader is a step that most readers should not miss. When students read orally, they have the opportunity to receive feedback from adult readers who can monitor and constructively critique their reading progress. This is necessary if emergent, poor, or moderate readers are to become fluent readers.

### Methods to Encourage Fluency

Effective means of encouraging your child's oral reading fluency include:

- **Modeling.** Parents should read aloud to children daily from picture books, chapter books, newspapers, and poetry selections.

**Note:** In the classroom, poor readers often only have other poor readers as models due to the organization of reading groups. It is important for every child to listen to effective fluent oral reading during reading instruction.

- **Repeated readings.** Parents should model fluent reading of a selected passage and then discuss new vocabulary and content. Then, the child should be given a copy of the same passage to practice reading independently until he/she can read the passage fluently, accurately, and with good expression.
- **Choral reading.** A poem is repeatedly read in unison, by parent and child, so that the child can feel the natural rhythm of the reading. This promotes fluency.

Oral reading fluency may at times seem elusive, but it is certainly not unattainable for most children. Consistent practice coupled with the resulting increase in confidence will ultimately lead to oral reading fluency.

### References

Allington, R.L. (1983). Fluency: The neglected reading goal. *The Reading Teacher*, 36, 556-561.

Nathan, R.G., & Stanovich, K.E. (1991). The causes and consequences of differences in reading fluency. *Theory into Practice*, 30, 176-184.

Zutell, J., & Rasinski, T.V. (1991). Training teachers to attend to their students' oral reading fluency. *Theory into Practice*, 30, 211-217.