

Improving Literacy Brief

WHY DOES FLUENT READING MATTER?

WHAT IS FLUENCY ?

Fluency is the ability to read words, phrases, sentences, and stories accurately, with enough speed, and expression.

Fluency with text is reading words with no noticeable cognitive effort. It is having mastered word recognition skills to the point of becoming so "automatic" that they do not require conscious attention.

WHY IS FLUENCY IMPORTANT ?

It is important to remember that fluency is not an end in itself but a critical gateway to comprehension. Fluent reading frees cognitive resources to process meaning.

Fluency in oral reading includes:

1. Accuracy, which is reading with few errors.
2. Reading speed is the rate at which a student reads.
3. Prosody is the skill of reading aloud with proper intonation, phrasing, and expression (Harn & Chard, 2008).

To be a fluent reader, all three of these components must be in place.

FLUENCY RESEARCH SAYS THAT SUCCESSFUL READERS ...

- rely primarily on the letters in the word rather than context or pictures to identify familiar and unfamiliar words.
- process every letter.
- use letter-sound correspondences to identify words.
- have a reliable strategy for decoding words.
- read words a sufficient number of times for them to become automatic. (Hasbrouck, 1998)



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WHY DOES FLUENT READING MATTER?

WHEN SHOULD TEACHERS FOCUS ON FLUENCY WITH CONNECTED TEXT?

Fluency develops through plentiful opportunities for practice in which the task can be performed with a high rate of success.

For students to develop fluency with connected text, they must first be able to decode words accurately. They must also be able to decode words quickly and effortlessly.

WHY FOCUS ON FLUENCY?

To gain meaning from text, students must read fluently. Proficient readers are so automatic with each component reading skill (phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary) that they focus their attention on constructing meaning from the print (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). These component reading skills need to be well developed to support understanding. It is not enough to be simply accurate; the skills must be automatic.

SUGGESTED CITATION

National Center on Improving Literacy. (2020). *Why Does Fluent Reading Matter?* <https://www.improvingliteracy.org/resource/why-does-fluent-reading-matter>

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AN OVERVIEW

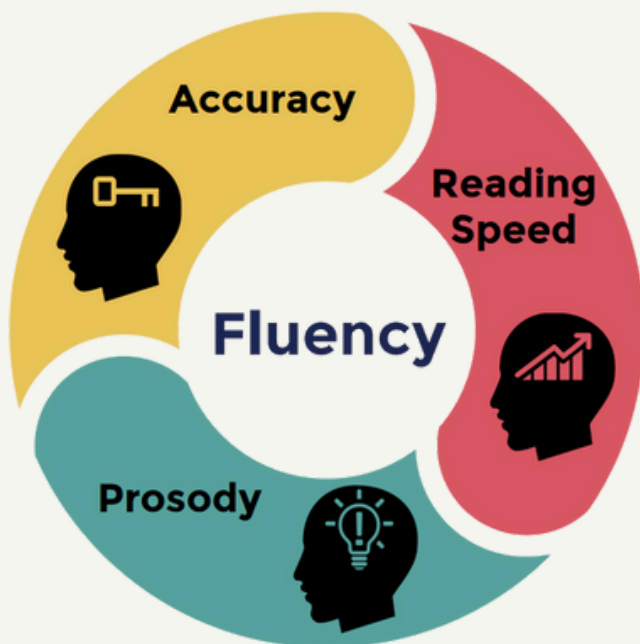
WHAT IS FLUENCY WITH TEXT?

1 OF THE 5 "BIG IDEAS" OF THE SCIENCE OF READING



Fluency is the ability to read words, phrases, sentences, and stories correctly, with enough speed and expression. It is having mastered word recognition skills to the point of becoming so "automatic" that they do not require conscious attention.

3 Parts of Oral Reading Fluency:



Accuracy


Reading with few errors.

Reading Speed

The rate at which a student reads.

Prosody

The skill of reading aloud with proper intonation, phrasing, and expression.



Fluency is not an end in itself but a critical gateway to comprehension. Fluent reading frees cognitive resources to process the meaning of what is being read.

For more information, visit improvingliteracy.org.



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