



Developing Reading Fluency

Foundations of Reading

To learn to read well, children need to know how to recognize and pronounce words (**decoding**), what words mean (**vocabulary**) and how to understand the meaning of a group of words or connected text (**comprehension**). To build these foundations of reading, teachers use a balanced approach and focus on the goal of reading for meaning. Parents play a vital role in supporting this work at home.

What is reading fluency?

Reading fluency is the ability to read with speed and accuracy. It is often associated with smooth and even-paced reading. Fluent readers sound like they are talking.

Strong fluency skills support reading comprehension by allowing the reader to concentrate on the meaning of the words rather than on reading them.

“Books, to the reading child, are so much more than books—they are dreams and knowledge, they are a future and a past.”

– Esther Meyne

How can I help to develop reading fluency at home?

There are several strategies you can use to support your child’s development in reading fluency. These strategies are very effective and are suggested for children who have some reading ability, but read hesitantly, word by word or with little expression.

As well as developing fluency, the following strategies will help your child to:

- increase their vocabulary
- discover that reading can be enjoyable
- gain confidence in their reading ability
- learn to read with expression

1. MODEL FLUENT READING

The most powerful way you can help your child develop a sense of reading fluency is by reading aloud to them on a daily basis.

In order for children to read fluently, they must first hear and understand what fluent reading sounds like. This modelling will enable them to transfer these skills into their own reading.

Expose your child to a wide variety of genres (styles of writing), including stories, poetry and folk and fairy tales with colourful, lyrical language. Read with expression and make the text come alive!

2. ECHO READING

Echo reading can build confidence and fluency. It gives children practice in reading with expression.

To do echo reading, read a line of text and ask your child to repeat the same line. With young children or non-readers, point to each line of text as it is read and encourage them to do the same. As they begin to use expression and read more fluently, encourage independent reading.

3. CHORAL READING

Have your child sit slightly in front of you and hold the reading material together. Ask your child to read along with you. Your voice should be slightly louder and faster than their voice to begin with. As they begin to master the text and gain confidence, soften your voice or lag slightly behind. If your child falters, increase loudness and speed once again.

4. WHISPER READING

Choose a story that your child has listened to or read already. Sit close to your child and as they read the story aloud, whisper directly into their ear. Lower your voice when your child is reading confidently; raise it slightly when assistance is needed.

Read slightly more slowly than your independent reading rate, but not as slowly as your child. Tell your child not to worry about keeping up. As your child's fluency improves, continue to read just a little faster than she does.

5. REPEATED READING

Repeated readings of a short story or a favourite part of a longer one also help to develop greater reading fluency. Invite your child to record their reading, listen to it and then reread the passage while recording it again. This strategy can be encouraging and fun for children since they can hear their improvement with each repetition. Repeated readings help children learn to recognize high-frequency words more easily and improve their reading fluency.

6. DIALOGUE READING

Dialogue reading is another effective strategy for building fluency and expression. Here, the child assumes the speaking part of one of the characters in the story while the parent takes on the rest of the text, including the roles of the other characters. This strategy provides reading support for your child while allowing them to focus on the voice and speech of their character. Enjoy switching roles and modelling expressive reading for your child. Help your child by tracking the text with your finger or a popsicle stick.

Books for Repeated and Phrased Readings

- The Very Quiet Cricket by Eric Carle
- If You Give a Mouse a Cookie by Felicia Bond
- Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin Jr.
- One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish by Dr. Seuss

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