

## The Benefits of Listening to Good Readers Read



Whether sat around a campfire or tucked up in bed, being told a good story is a tradition that goes back generations. In part, it's what makes us human.

A good story, told well stokes the fire of our imagination and sets our creativity free. A story shared from the heart can unite a community and strengthen an individual. Stories help us to understand ourselves and empathise with others.

A good story, told well helps children build a strong visual narrative and secure important sequencing skills. It helps them to connect with the stories they hear on an emotional level and improves their understanding.

The journey we take when learning to read and write is one that should be filled with excitement and wonder. We can enhance and enrich that journey by helping children engage with the spoken word, in the knowledge that it will encourage readers to pick up a book and writers to pick up a pen.

A friend once said to me that in life we should enjoy the journey and not just the destination. I admit, this is not always an easy path to take. But if we can adopt this mindset, it makes the journey we take that much easier and a whole lot more satisfying.

The journey we take to become a lover of literature, begins with listening. It is a journey worth taking and one we must embrace and enjoy.

We must never underestimate the powerful role listening has to play on our road to becoming a lover of language and literature, and we must never view listening and speaking as being the poor cousin to reading and writing. It is, after all, how our journey to become literate begins.

When reading aloud to children, it is important that we provide opportunities to discuss what we are reading and for us to pass on our passion for the written word.

If what you are reading moves you... tell them.

If what you are reading makes you wonder about the world or question what the future holds... tell them.

If a word or a sentence makes you pause for thought or excites you, makes you gasp or giggle... tell them.

AND TELL THEM WHY.

This will help children develop the art of storytelling and improve their Emotional Dexterity, so important when supporting a child as they endeavour to understand text deeply. This is essential if we wish them to become a lifelong lover of reading and for them to fall in love with the English language.



# The Art of Storytelling

## What Might We Focus On?

To read well we must read fluently. To not do so impedes our Working Memory and makes it difficult to make connections within the text which underpin our ability to understand (and ultimately enjoy) what is being read.

When considering this important aspect of reading, especially when we are sharing a story or poem with others out loud, we ought to focus on the three main strands of **Reading Fluency** and consider carefully the **6 Ps**.

## Reading Fluency

### ★ Accuracy

*The ability to decode.*

### ★ Automaticity

*Whole word recognition.*

### ★ Fluency for Meaning

*Elements which underpin understanding and bring text to life.*

# Fluency for Meaning: The 6 Ps

*How can we bring text to life and infuse it with meaning when reading out loud?*



Pitch



Power



Pace



Punctuation



Pause



Passion

*Feel free to use these icons in your classroom.*

*This will help promote discussion around what it means to be a good reader when reading aloud and improve our understanding of what is being read.*

*I discuss this in detail during my Guided Reading and Reading Intervention CPD.*



Pitch



Power



Pace



Punctuation



Pause



Passion

# READING FLUENCY

What might fluency practice look like in the classroom?

Actively teaching reading fluency to struggling pupils can be beneficial. This tool offers practical classroom examples to support developing pupils' reading fluency.



To view our Literacy Guidance reports, visit the EEF website:

[eef.li/guidance](https://eef.li/guidance)



## What the evidence tells us:

## Possible approaches–

**Whole class fluency practice**



**Small group & 1:1 fluency intervention**



### Early Years Examples

*Developing early reading can often be integrated successfully with communication and language approaches.*

*Children are likely to benefit from singing and rhyming activities focused on developing alphabetic knowledge and phonological awareness to lay the groundwork for decoding.*

- Routinely incorporate rich opportunities for children to sing songs, recite rhymes and learn poems by heart during story time. These can be rehearsed over and over, with and without a copy of the text.
- Read aloud from picture books with repeated refrains so that children can start to join in and emulate prosodic reading. For example, an adult might read 'I Want My Hat Back' by Jon Klassen daily with the children, sweeping their finger under the phrases to model expert prosody and pausing so that all children can chorally recite the refrain and practise using good prosody.
- For children at the upper end of the Early Years, find opportunities for them to re-read familiar books so that they can apply the skills of fluent reading with little difficulty. For example, an adult might ask a child to use their story-telling voice to re-read their familiar book to a partner, pretending to be the teacher.
- Use echo reading to model the prosody required to bring the text to life and re-read sentences until a good level of fluency is achieved by the child.



### Key Stage 1 Examples

*From the earliest opportunity, reading should be presented as the process of understanding a text.*

*As children learn the complex skill of reading, we help develop skills of word recognition, reading fluency and making sense of a text.*

- Repeated reading aloud from picture books, ensuring children can see the text, helps to developing familiarity. Encourage children to read along (where words and phrases are accessible for them) and to read with good prosody.
- Sing songs and perform poetry together, providing the text for the children to follow, rehearse and perform.
- Find opportunities for children to re-read familiar books matched to their level of decoding so that they can confidently apply the skills of fluent reading with little difficulty.
- Incorporate repeated reading, self-correction and choral reading to explicitly improve children's prosody. For example, children might read and re-read 'What is Pink?' by Christina Rossetti, with the teacher modelling good prosody and the children echoing along.

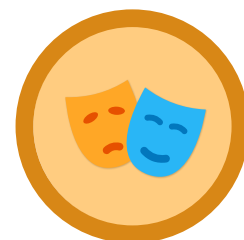
\* This resource was developed with the support of colleagues from Herts for Learning.

	What the evidence tells us:	Possible approaches–		
		Whole class fluency practice 	Small group & 1:1 fluency intervention 	
<p><b>Key Stage 2 Examples</b></p>	<p>Most pupils will benefit from being explicitly taught and being encouraged to practise through guided oral reading instruction and repeated reading.</p> <p>Reading accuracy and automaticity can also be supported by building children's knowledge of aspects of word structure such as common letter combinations (orthographic awareness) and the meaningful parts within words (morphological awareness).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When reading from a class text, model strategies such as exploration of morphology or etymology to read unfamiliar words with accuracy and find opportunities for repeated reading to build automaticity. For example, when reading 'Atlas of Adventures' by Lucy Letherland, the teacher might focus on and discuss the meaning of the word 'spectacular'. They might highlight the root word 'spect', model how to pronounce the word and then link to other words that contain the same root such as 'spectate', 'inspect' and 'respect'.</li> <li>Sing songs and perform poetry, speeches, monologues and playscripts together. Provide texts for pupils to follow, re-read, rehearse and perform.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide motivational opportunities for pupils to re-read a text many times. For example, a group of pupils might practice and perform a text already shared with the class using 'Readers' Theatre' to support oral reading development.</li> <li>Provide pupils with bespoke book recommendations for independent reading, which are matched to interest and pitched at a level to enable effortless, confident reading.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Key Stage 3 Examples</b></p>	<p>While most pupils begin secondary school with the general skills and knowledge needed to read accurately, fluently and with comprehension, some do not.</p> <p>Given the complexity of academic reading, pupils need to be able to deploy an array of reading strategies, which can be modelled and practised in the classroom to develop students as strategic readers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When reading from a class text, model appropriate strategies to tackle the meaning of unfamiliar words. Encourage repeated reading of the word to build accuracy and automaticity.</li> <li>For example, in a science lesson might involve pupils revisiting prior learning on reaction energy and catalysts. To support the decoding and automaticity of newly learned tier 3 words 'exothermic' and 'endothermic', the whole class might choral read a short paragraph in unison to ensure all pupils are given the opportunity to practise reading these words aloud in context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide motivational opportunities for pupils to re-read familiar texts. For example, using a poem from 'The Crossover' by Kwame Alexander, pupils might practise reading a stanza each repeatedly, coming together to perform the poem.</li> <li>Use echo and choral reading when working closely with small groups or 1:1 to support oral reading development.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Terminology</b></p>	<p><b>Echo reading</b> is a rereading strategy where the teacher reads a segment of text aloud and the pupils echo it back.</p>	<p><b>Choral reading</b> is when a small group or whole class read aloud together.</p>	<p><b>Morphology</b> is the study of words and their parts e.g. prefixes and suffixes.</p>	<p><b>Etymology</b> is the study of the origin of words.</p>

The Wise Multi-Academy Trust uses Reader's Theatre to support pupils to develop their reading fluency.

Reader's Theatre is a widely used teaching strategy that exemplifies how guided oral reading instruction and repeated reading of texts can be used to support pupils to develop reading fluency.<sup>1</sup> The Trust have developed their own guide to support the use of Reader's Theatre in the classroom.

The Wise Multi-Academy Trust is a family of schools in the North East of England.



<p><b>Step 1: Adult as model</b></p>	<p><b>Step 2: Echo reading</b></p>	<p><b>Step 3: Text allocation</b></p>
<p>The adult reads the selected passage of the class text aloud as an 'expert model' of fluency whilst pupils follow the text with their own copy. This may be repeated multiple times as necessary.</p>	<p>Children echo back the section read by the adult, emulating their intonation, tone, speed, volume, expression, movement, use of punctuation, etc.</p>	<p>Children work in pairs or triads. Each group may:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. all have the exact same short section of text, <b>or</b></li> <li>2. a longer section might be split into short parts, so that each group has a different piece.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Step 4: Repeated choral reading</b></p>	<p><b>Step 5: Close reading</b></p>	<p><b>Step 6: Text marking</b></p>
<p>In their groups, children read their section aloud, echoing the initial reading by the adult.</p>	<p>In their pairs/triads children make a close reading of their section of text and think about meaning, audience, and purpose. This requires children to look closely at the writer's use of language and consider characterisations, etc.</p>	<p>Each child has a copy of the text to annotate in order to inform their performance. This is discussed and agreed as a group.</p> <p>Prompts are provided to direct their reading.</p>
<p><b>Step 7: Practise</b></p>	<p><b>Step 8: Perform</b></p>	<p><b>Step 9: Reflect</b></p>
<p>Time is provided for groups to rehearse their reading. They may decide to change or add to their performance slightly as a result of their rehearsal.</p>	<p>Each group performs their rehearsed piece.</p> <p>(Adult may record so that children can appraise their own performance).</p>	<p>Children evaluate their own and/or others' performances and give feedback. They may use a reading fluency rubric or the prompts as success criteria to support articulation of evaluations.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Young, C. and Rasinski, T. (2018) 'Readers Theatre: Effects on Word Recognition Automaticity and Reading Prosody', *Journal of Research in Reading*, 41, pp. 475-485.

Garrett, T. D., and O'Connor, D. (2010) 'Readers' Theater: "Hold on, let's read it again."', *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 43(1), pp. 6-13.

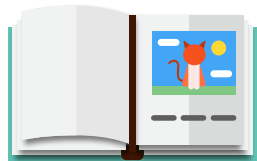
Young, C. Stokes, F. and Rasinski, T. (2017) 'Readers Theatre Plus Comprehension and Word Study', *The Reader Teacher*, 71(3), pp. 351-355.

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). However, there are many misconceptions about what reading fluency is and is not...



### Myth 1: 'Accurate decoding automatically leads to good comprehension'

- Word reading fluency is important, but is not sufficient to guarantee comprehension.
- Some pupils become skilled at word recognition but then struggle to comprehend what they read.
- Fluency practice helps to bridge this transition to better comprehension.



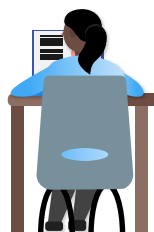
### Myth 2: 'A fluent reader is a fast reader'

- Fluency is sometimes confused with how quickly a pupil can read a piece of text. In fact, faster reading does not lead to better reading.
- The aim of fluency practice should be to support pupils to read at a pace which allows comprehension to flourish (whether reading aloud or silently).



### Myth 3: 'Silent independent reading improves fluency'

- Silent reading in itself does not lead to improved reading fluency. However, the connection between oral reading and silent reading is clear: fluent oral reading leads to fluent silent reading.
- Teachers modelling oral reading is an important part of fluency practice, so that pupils have the opportunity to 'hear' what fluent reading sounds like.
- Assisted reading strategies, such as paired reading or the use of technology, can be helpful in supporting independent reading.



### Myth 4: 'Teacher modelling of oral reading alone improves fluency'

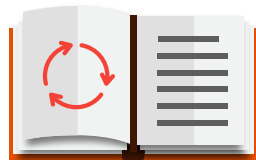
- Reading aloud to pupils is an opportunity to model expert reading but is not sufficient on its own to improve fluency.
- Scaffolding pupils' reading through a gradual release of responsibility from teacher modelling to independent reading is an important process when developing fluency and independence.





### Myth 5 'Reading a text once is enough'

- Pupils face many challenges when reading an unfamiliar text such as navigating new vocabulary, grappling with text structure or a lack of background knowledge to draw upon as they read. Therefore, reading a text once is rarely enough for good comprehension.
- Repeated reading allows pupils to rehearse and refine their reading of complex texts with improved fluency and comprehension, and these benefits can then be applied to the reading of future new texts.



### Myth 6: 'Fluency practice is best suited to fiction texts'

- From exploration of character in a drama text to understanding photosynthesis in a scientific text, developing fluency will support comprehension of all types of texts.
- However, picking the right text is crucial. It should be motivating, challenging and diverse.
- Texts should offer opportunity to deepen subject knowledge and encounter aspirational tier 2 vocabulary and longer sentence structures.



### Myth 7: 'Fluency practice is not appropriate for older pupils'

- Reading fluency is not linked to age and therefore fluency practice shouldn't be either.
- We can all struggle to read a text fluently if it's pitched at a level that's too difficult for us. Equally, we can all be very fluent when reading a text which is too easy.
- Some older pupils will require fluency instruction to support them to access and comprehend texts appropriate for their curriculum.



### Myth 8: 'Practices such as 'round robin reading' improve fluency'

- 'Round robin reading' or 'popcorn reading' are strategies that are often used with good intention. However, selecting pupils at random to read aloud, without time to practise, can lead to unnecessary embarrassment, stress and cognitive load for pupils. Likewise, listening along to slow, dysfluent reading can put other pupils' comprehension at risk.
- Assisted reading or repeated reading are better alternatives when seeking to include more pupils in reading practice.

