

Helping Your Child Build Fluency

What Is Fluency? How Can I Help?

An important step in becoming a good reader is developing fluency. Fluency refers to the ability to read accurately, with appropriate speed and expression. The fluent reader sounds good, is easy to listen to, and reads with enough expression to help the listener understand and enjoy what is being read.

The word *fluency* comes from a Latin word that means *to flow*. So, thinking about flowing—fluent reading is smooth and effortless.

A fluent reader recognizes words automatically and does not have to concentrate on sounding out words. When the reader has to put lots of attention on recognizing words, it does not leave much time for understanding what is read. A fluent reader does not read word-by-word and can see phrases when reading. There is time to think about what is coming next. When your child can read the words easily and automatically, he can pay attention to making sense of what he is reading.

You probably already do two important things to help your child build his fluency. One way your child will build fluency skills is to listen to you read to him. Another way he will improve his fluency is reading aloud to you. Finding 15 minutes a day for reading to your child and listening to him read will help in his overall reading growth.

Read aloud to your child often and with expression. When you read to your child, you are modeling fluent reading. Your child hears good reading and will transfer those experiences to his own reading. During these read-aloud times, try to make your reading as fluent as possible. Draw attention to the way you use your voice. Ask questions like, “What did you notice about the way I used my voice?” or “How did I use my voice to show emotion?”

Each time your child reads aloud to you, he will gain confidence. Praise him for the things you hear. “I loved the way you used your voice in this section! You really sounded scared.” “I like how you paused between the sentences. It gave me a chance to think about what was happening.” You may be able to help your child understand how his reading is improving with a comment like “Your speed was so much better on this page. I was able to think about what might happen next.”

Whether you are reading to your child or listening to your child read to you, try different types of books. When you go to the library together, check out some nonfiction books. Many children love to read about famous people, countries, animals, and science.



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