

Assessing Oral Reading Fluency

Select the Passages

Select three grade-level passages, regardless of students' instructional levels. A fourth-grade student who reads at the third-grade level or who is receiving intervention at the third-grade level will still need to be assessed using passages from fourth-grade level text. Scholastic RED passages have been carefully selected, edited, and validated at each grade level. When using your own grade-level passages, ensure that:

- Each passage contains roughly 200 words.
- At least one nonfiction passage is included as part of the selection of three.
- Passages do not have exceptionally difficult vocabulary, phrasing, or proper nouns.
- Students have not read the passages prior to assessment.

Administer the Test

1. After you have selected three grade-level passages, print two copies of each—one for your student and one for yourself to record errors as he or she reads.
2. Before the timed reading begins, say to your student, *Today you are going to take an Oral Fluency Assessment. I'm going to give you a sheet of paper with a passage written on it. You may not know all the words in the passage, but try your best to read each of them. I will tell you how to read the words you do not know. We will do this three times with three different passages. Each time, I will time you for one minute.*
3. Hand a copy of the passage to your student. Tell your student, *I will begin timing as soon as you begin reading. After one minute, I will say "stop" so you will know to stop reading.* Begin timing when your student begins reading.
4. As your student reads, follow along in your copy of the text, marking words with an "X" that are read incorrectly and pronouncing words out loud that the student does not know. Remember the following guidelines when marking your copy as the student reads:
 - a) For a word to be read correctly, it should be read correctly in context. For example, when reading the word *live* in the following sentence, the student must pronounce it with a long-*i* sound: "There was a live audience during this show."
 - b) Self-corrections within three seconds are counted as correct.

Assessment Objectives

In order for students to become fluent readers, they must spend time reading out loud so their progress can be gauged. An Oral Fluency Assessment (OFA) involves taking one-minute samples of students' oral reading of three brief, grade-level passages.

When to Use Oral Fluency Assessment

Timed samples should be taken three times a year (beginning, middle, and end of year) as part of ongoing fluency assessment. For students struggling significantly with fluency, weekly checks are recommended.

Materials

- Three grade-level passages. Make sure you have enough copies for each student and for you to follow and mark.
- Stopwatch, timer, or watch or clock with a second hand.
- Pen to mark words read incorrectly and the stopping point.

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- c) Repetitions are counted as correct.
- d) Consider the following as words read incorrectly:
- Mispronunciations—words that are misread.
For example, *ship* for *sheep*.
 - Substitutions of any kind—words that are substituted for the correct word. For example, *dog* for *cat*.
 - Omissions—words that are skipped or not read.
 - Words that students struggle to read for three or more seconds.
When this occurs, pronounce the word for the student and have him or her continue reading. Count the word as incorrect.
5. After one minute, say “Stop!” Make a vertical line after the last word read.
6. Oral fluency is measured in words read correctly per minute (WCPM). For example, if a student reads 95 words in one minute, but mispronounces or omits eight words, the WCPM for the passage is 87.
7. Repeat the procedure with the other two passages.

Interpret the Data

When you have completed timing and marking a passage, count the number of words read for each passage. Count the number of words read incorrectly for each passage and subtract that number from the total number of words read for that passage. This is the WCPM. You need three WCPMs before you have a meaningful score.

1. Once you have three scores, take the median, or middle, of the three scores. For example, if your student’s scores were 98, 101, and 104, the median score is 101. This is your student’s WCPM score.
2. Compare your student’s WCPM score to the Oral Reading Fluency Norms chart to determine whether your student is reading above, below, or on grade level.
3. Record your student’s score on the Oral Fluency Roster. Use this roster to chart and compare your student’s scores and progress over time.

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Understanding Oral Reading Fluency Norms

These research-based benchmarks for oral fluency are indicators of a student's overall reading proficiency. An Oral Fluency Assessment should be one of multiple measures you use to collect data about your students to track their progress and inform your instruction. Oral fluency norms will help you determine where your students are against fluency standards and goals for their grade and the time of year. To use the norms to determine whether your student is reading above, below, or on grade level:

1. Find the grade level of your student on the chart. Then look at the time of year during which the testing took place.
2. Compare the student's WCPM (the median score from the three passages read) with the three numbers given for that grade level and time of year. Here's a breakdown of the numbers:
 - The top number shows the fluency measure of students who are reading above grade-level expectations. They are reading at or above the 90th percentile. For example, a fourth-grade student who reads 170 WCPM during the middle of the year reads approximately at the 90th percentile. The 90th percentile is significantly above average.
 - Students who are reading at or above the 50th percentile in reading fluency have good comprehension of grade-level text. The 50th percentile is the average, or on grade level.
 - The bottom number shows the fluency measure of students who are reading at or above the 10th percentile in reading fluency. The 10th percentile is significantly below the average, and students who read at this level are in immediate need of intervention.

Setting Instructional Goals

You can use the results of the Oral Fluency Assessment to set instructional goals and monitor students' performance over time.

- For most students, aiming for the 50th percentile is a good goal—this is the average and it is the level at which students can handle reading most grade-level text fluently.
- Any student who falls significantly below the 50th percentile needs systematic instruction to increase reading fluency. You can use the Oral Reading Fluency Norms Chart or the Oral Assessment Calculator to set fluency rates and calculate the weekly gain in WCPM that is

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necessary to achieve the target rate. You will need to take the difference between a student's score and the score at the 50th percentile at the end of the year and then divide it by the number of school weeks between now and then.

- For example, to be on level for fluency, a second-grade student who reads at a rate of 40 WCPM at the beginning of the year will need to gain roughly 54 WCPM by the end of the school year to hit the target fluency goal of 94 WCPM. This means his fluency goal and WCPM must increase by three words a week over 18 weeks to reach the grade-level target.

Assessing Oral Ready Fluency *(continued)*

Oral Reading Fluency Norms

These norms are from an electronic aggregation of students in schools using AIMSweb Benchmark Reading Assessment Passages.

Grade	Percentile	BEGINNING	MIDDLE	END
		WCPM	WCPM	WCPM
1	90	0	60	103
	75	0	37	77
	50	0	21	52
	25	0	12	33
	10	0	7	20
2	90	95	125	140
	75	71	100	117
	50	49	76	94
	25	27	52	70
	10	15	30	49
3	90	125	151	168
	75	96	125	139
	50	73	96	110
	25	52	72	85
	10	30	50	57
4	90	142	167	180
	75	118	140	152
	50	94	114	124
	25	71	90	99
	10	48	66	75
5	90	169	184	189
	75	141	156	166
	50	117	131	137
	25	89	106	112
	10	65	78	88
6	90	171	185	201
	75	143	160	172
	50	115	132	145
	25	91	106	117
	10	72	80	90
7	90	200	206	213
	75	175	183	193
	50	147	157	167
	25	126	134	146
	10	106	115	124
8	90	208	219	221
	75	183	195	198
	50	156	166	171
	25	126	144	145
	10	100	112	115

WCPM = Words Read Correctly Per Minute

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Oral Fluency Roster

Teacher _____ Grade _____ Year _____

#	Student	Words Correct Per Minute (Median Score)		
		Beginning	Middle	End
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Assessing Oral Reading Fluency *(continued)***OFA Passage, Grade 1**

The cat in the yellow house was lazy. All day long he slept in the window.	9 16
He didn't hunt for mice. He didn't watch the birds. He didn't chase after bees. He didn't come when he was called.	25 33 38
"Harry!" the old woman that lived in the yellow house with him would call. "Harry, I just saw a mouse!"	46 55 58
Harry would close his eyes and purr. He would not get up to help the old woman. He would not go and catch the mouse. Oh no, he would not move because Harry was very lazy.	66 76 86 94
One day Harry was sleeping. Something jumped onto his pillow. Something tugged on his ear. Harry opened his eyes slowly. A tiny mouse stood in front of him. The mouse crossed his eyes at Harry. He stuck out his tongue at Harry.	100 108 117 126 136
"I bet you can't catch me," he shouted at Harry.	145 146
"You are right," Harry said. "I can't catch you." Then Harry went back to sleep.	154 161
The mouse watched Harry sleep. "What an odd cat," he said to himself. "I have never heard of a cat who will not chase mice. I think I will call my brothers and sisters. This is a good place to live. No cat will chase us out."	168 178 191 201 208
The mouse called his family. His family came to stay. They built nests in the walls. They built nests in the floors. They built nests in the TV. They even built a nest under Harry.	215 225 235 243
Harry was asleep, so he didn't notice.	250

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OFA Passage, Grade 2

Meg, Anna, and Kate were best friends.	7
They always ate lunch together, and they always played at recess. They always called each other on the phone.	15 23 26
One day Anna came to school with very sad news. She was moving far, far away.	34 42
Kate and Meg felt very bad. The three girls had been friends forever. They had gone to the same church, daycare, and preschool.	51 60 65
Anna told her friends that her dad had a new job. He said it was a step up in the company he worked for. Anna didn't care about all of that. She only knew that she was going to a new town. She wouldn't know anyone. She was scared, but no one seemed to care what Anna thought. At least no one except Meg and Kate.	74 85 93 104 112 121 130 131
The girls had only three weeks to prepare for Anna's move. They spent every free minute with each other. The girls made plans to be friends forever. They traded addresses and agreed to write every week.	139 147 156 162 167
The girls cried the morning Anna left. As she pulled out of her driveway, she saw tears running down their faces.	175 184 188
Meg and Kate were sad, but they knew they still had each other. They decided to send a letter to Anna that very day. They knew she would smile when she received the first piece of mail at her new house.	197 206 215 224 229

Assessing Oral Reading Fluency *(continued)*

OFA Passage, Grade 3

It rained all day long. The wind and rain knocked the remaining leaves to the ground where they were swept into the street. Today was a typical fall day.	15
Just two days ago, the sun was out and the temperatures were very pleasant. Raking leaves into large playful piles was very relaxing.	29
The family worked together gathering the maple leaves into piles. Kids will be kids, and they loved jumping and hiding in the leaves. Even their dog liked to romp around in the leaves. It was fun for everyone.	42
The next day, the weather changed slightly. Clouds began to roll into the area and darken the sky. It did not rain then, but it was clear that winter was near. The family thought that the ground would be covered in no time. Winter was approaching fast.	52
They awoke to the rain hitting the roof of their home. It was a light rain, so they figured it would rain all day. They were right. Now the kids would not be able to play in the leaves. The leaves were all wet and brown. They were no longer dry and colorful.	63
The winds picked up speed and sent the piles of leaves blowing across the yard and into the street. The kids thought they were pretty lucky to have been able to play in the leaves yesterday.	78
Later in the day, the street sweeper came into their neighborhood and, with its mighty vacuum, gobbled up the leaves that had found their way into the street. The leaves were gone.	90
That night the kids were tucked into bed for the evening. As they slept, the rain turned to snow.	102
The kids dreamed of sledding and snowmen. The next morning their dreams came true. Snow!	119
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Assessing Oral Reading Fluency *(continued)*

OFA Passage, Grade 4

It was difficult moving to a new house. When I was eight, we left our old neighborhood and moved to a new one. We packed my dresser, my bunk bed, my computer, and my scooter. In every room of the house, boxes were piled high like building blocks.	16 30 44 48
The house felt still. I walked from room to room trying to remember what each one used to be like. As I walked through the living room, I noticed orange scribble marks on the wallpaper. My younger brother made those marks when we used to play art museum. Entering my bedroom, I noticed a large scratch on the hardwood floor. That was where my puppy, Clyde, and I used to play fetch with his toy kitten. Wandering down the hallway, I noticed pencil marks near the bathroom door. That was where my father used to measure me to see how tall I had grown each birthday. I already began to miss the wallpaper on the walls and the light fixtures on the ceilings.	61 77 88 102 116 130 143 159 171
“This has always been my house,” I thought. “I don’t want to leave.” There had to be some way I could keep my house.	184 195
Looking out my bedroom window, I noticed the tree house Dad and I constructed years before. I hurried to the backyard, climbed up to my tree house, and decided not to go unless my tree house went too. I would keep the tree house to myself, and then I would be happy.	208 221 237 247
Just then my neighbor Logan arrived to say goodbye. “I wish you could stay, but I know you’ll have even more fun at your new house,” he said sadly.	260 276
Suddenly, I began to think of someone besides myself. I thought about my house, my yard, and my neighbors. I would miss everything, but I was going to get a new house, a new yard, and new neighbors. Logan, though, was just losing a friend. I realized then that Logan needed the tree house more than I did.	288 302 317 332 334
“Goodbye, Logan. Take care of the tree house,” I said. “It’s all yours.”	347
The smile on Logan’s face made me feel much better.	357

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OFA Passage, Grade 5

Leo went to the forest every day to gather firewood. He would collect the wood,	15
tie it into small bundles, and carry the bundles home each day. He would pack	30
his lunch and stay in the forest until sunset. At noon he would have his lunch,	46
and at noon a bird would visit him. It was white with ash-colored wings and was	63
larger than a dove but smaller than an eagle. Leo always shared a morsel of his	79
food with the bird. Leo called it Jayto and would talk to it from time to time.	96
One very hot summer day, Leo began to eat his lunch and Jayto arrived	110
right on time. Leo gave him some of his lunch, and the bird eagerly pecked at it.	127
It was so hot, Leo decided to take a nap. As he lay down, the bird began to	145
peck and caw at him. The bird was able to convince Leo to follow him. Jayto	161
kept flying small distances waiting for Leo to catch up. Finally they came upon a	176
broken stone wall.	179
Leo had once heard that a rich businessman used to live here long ago.	193
One day he left for a foreign country and never returned. His wife lived alone for	209
a long time, and it was said that she buried her jewelry box and that a strange	226
bird stood guard over it attacking anyone that got near.	236
Was it possible that Jayto was this bird? Suddenly the bird flew from the	250
wall to the ground and started pecking. Leo helped the bird, and sure enough,	264
they uncovered a jewelry box. It was filled with the gold, diamonds, rubies, and	278
other precious stones.	281
Leo decided not to go back to town for fear that his treasure would be	296
taken from him. With Jayto on his shoulder, he traveled to a large city far away.	312
He became a rich man and built a beautiful mansion. The mansion had a large	327
garden filled with ponds and flowers. Jayto had all the mangoes that he could	341
eat, and Leo lived a long and happy life.	350

Assessing Oral Reading Fluency *(continued)*

OFA Passage, Grade 6

One of the reasons Becky loved traveling on the weekends to her grandparents' house in Connecticut was her Grandpa Bob. As soon as she and her parents pulled into the winding drive and stopped in front of her grandparents' house, she and Grandpa Bob would go for a walk.	13 27 40 49
Becky lived in New York City in an apartment she shared with her parents and a golden retriever named Ralph. She and Ralph walked in the city, and she saw lots of interesting things. They saw yellow taxicabs, men in suits, and women in high heels. But never in New York did she see the fantastic things she saw with Grandpa Bob on their walks.	62 76 90 106 114
Grandpa Bob knew just about everything there was to know about the forest and the animals that lived there. Once, when she and Grandpa Bob were walking, a blue bird landed on his shoulder. When it flew away, Becky remembered her grandpa had looked down at her and winked.	126 140 153 163
"It was just telling me some secrets, that's all, Becky," he had told her. "That bird just told me there would be a frost tonight and that there is a herd of deer nibbling on grass just beyond those maple trees."	177 195 204
Becky followed with her eyes where her grandpa was pointing and saw a pelt of brown fur and the long legs and the velvet nose that did indeed belong to a white-tailed deer.	216 233 238
She couldn't believe a blue bird was smart enough to tell her grandpa all that. At the same time, she wished one of those critters would land on her shoulder and sing secrets to her.	251 267 273
Later that evening, when Grandpa Bob was dozing in front of the fire with his pipe hanging out of his mouth and Becky and her mom and dad were playing a game of cards with Grandma, Becky leaned in close to her mom and whispered in her ear.	286 302 317
"When I grow up, Mom, I think I'm going to be like Grandpa Bob."	321 335

Assessing Oral Reading Fluency *(continued)*

OFA Passage, Grade 7

I live in the tiny town of Peanut, Pennsylvania, in the second to the last house at the end of a dead-end road.	17
There isn't a whole lot to do in Peanut, but we do have a grocer, a baker, a hairdresser, a mechanic, AND an inventor.	24
It's Tommy O'Connor who put our little village on the map. He lives just down the road from me. His house is right before the dead end. A lot of people go back there, turning their cars around when they realize they're lost.	40
That's how he acquires many of his customers for his bizarre inventions. People pull onto our road, thinking it'll go on forever, but it doesn't. It stops dead in its tracks at Tommy's front door. That means booming business for Tommy.	48
Tommy has signs for his inventions posted in the ditches up and down our road and out on the freeway. Gigantic signs are nailed to telephone poles and dead tree trunks. They hang from tree branches and other people's mailboxes.	62
Tourists often stop at Tommy's house, and once they're there, they exclaim over his strange inventions. Then they pull out their checkbooks and spend big bucks.	79
Last spring, Tommy crossed his lawn mower with his snowmobile and used it to both clear snow and cut grass. Just a month ago, he found an old hot air balloon in the dump, hooked it up to his own car, and now he no longer has to fight traffic on the way to work. He transformed his wife's hair dryer into a miniature rocket engine and his son's Nintendo into a toaster. Last week he attempted to sell me a calculator that he'd turned into a cell phone, but I had to refuse because we didn't need any more cell phones in the house.	91
He tuned up my car for me about a week ago. The repairs it required were simple—an oil change and a refill on windshield wiper fluid. When I got it back it could go from zero to ninety in a second flat and the radio could pick up stations from around the world.	102
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OFA Passage, Grade 8

Jellyfish are creatures found in most bodies of salt water, from the tropical waters of the Caribbean Sea to the cold, dark waters of the Arctic Ocean.	13
Jellyfish are unusual creatures. When seen in the water, it's hard to believe they are a species from this planet. They look like aliens hanging suspended in water with their luminous layers of tissue and flesh. They have long, curly tentacles and plastic-like bubble tops that sway in the sea.	27
Although it's difficult to believe, jellyfish have no heart, blood, brain, or gills. You can see through their mostly-hollow stomach cavities where their food is digested and dissolved. Jellyfish have no proper eyes or ears. In fact, it's possible to believe that jellyfish are just brainless blobs without the slightest spark of intelligence. Amazingly enough, despite their lack of sight and hearing, jellyfish can distinguish touch, temperature, light, and darkness. They also know the direction and pull of water currents.	39
Jellyfish come in an assortment of colors and shades. The jellyfish living in cooler waters are generally pale or milky white in color. Many of the jellyfish that live in warmer, tropical waters are often strikingly colored in shades of magenta, scarlet, yellow, and orange.	52
A jellyfish can be as tiny as a thimble, and some can grow to be as colossal as a satellite dish. Most jellyfish can maneuver feebly in the water; however, their poor swimming skills place them at the mercy and whimsy of ocean currents.	65
Some jellyfish ride the ocean currents alone, while other species travel in special groups called colonies. The man-of-war is an example of a highly adapted jellyfish that travels with a colony. The man-of-war serves a special function in its colony. It catches prey with a very long tentacle that can trail as far as one hundred feet through the sea. The man-of-war's prey includes shrimp, squid, and fish. It also produces potent venom that is harmful to humans who may swim nearby, unaware of the man-of-war's clever and stunning snares.	78
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