



Little Wandle fluency assessments

What is fluency and why is it important?

To be able to read, children need to be taught an efficient strategy to decode words. That strategy is phonics. Phonic decoding skills must be practised until children become automatic and fluent reading is established.

The simple one-minute assessments below can be used to measure the fluency of children in the final stages of Phase 5.

Research identifies the key factors of fluency to be:

- accuracy
- rate/automaticity
- prosody/expression (pauses, intonation).

These passages can be used to work out the **accuracy** and **rate** of a child's reading. They are fully decodable and can be used alongside the Year 1 Spring 2 and Summer 1 and 2 assessments.

It is common for children to be unable to read with prosody when they are learning to read – they are not reading at a fast enough rate to think about what they are reading as they read. A reading speed of 90 words per minute is required to integrate comprehension whilst reading (Armbruster et al, 2001). But be warned: a fast reading speed alone is not a full measure of fluency. Both accuracy and prosody need to be measured too.

Children are unlikely to be reading at 90 words per minute in Year 1, and so not able to read with fluency and comprehension – yet. Children in Year 1 should be reading at 60–70+ words per minute at the end of the programme. Continued reading instruction in Year 2 is therefore crucial in order to teach fluency and enable children to become readers for life.

Why assess fluency?

While it may be surprising that a one-minute assessment can be so informative, these assessments have been shown, in both theoretical and empirical research, to serve as an accurate and powerful indicator of overall reading competence – especially through its strong correlation with comprehension. The validity and reliability of the assessments have been well established in a body of research extending over the past 25 years (Fuchs et al., 2001; Shinn, 1998).

How do I assess prosody?

You can assess prosody within your reading practice sessions when the children read independently during the final read. The children will have practised the text multiple times at this stage, and they can think about how they can show comprehension through intonation and expression as they read.

Carrying out the fluency assessment

- Give the child the text.
- Have your mark sheet version of the text ready to mark.
- Tell the child that they will be reading for one minute.
- Ask the child to read the text to you.
- Tell them to stop once the minute is up.

How to mark for reading rate and accuracy

- Tick above each word read accurately.
- Circle any word the child misses out.
- Write in any additional words the child says.
- Write a wavy line underneath any words the child sounds out.
- Write the number of correctly read words onto the sheet. This is the number of words the child can read per minute (reading rate).
- Write the number of correctly read words above the total number of words the child read/attempted to read – this tells you the level of accuracy. (You can calculate the accuracy as a percentage if you wish.)

Make sure the books used for the fluency assessments aren't taught directly before the assessment. The books used are:

- Phase 5 Set 3 *Don't Blame me* by Charlotte Guillain and Jon Stuart
- Phase 5 Set 4 *The Hide and Seek Squirrels* by Lari Don and Deborah Partington
- Phase 5 Set 5 *The Shy Monster* by Kathy Webb and Fabrizo Di Baldo.

Using data from the fluency assessments

The fluency assessments will tell you the rate each child reads at (words per minute) and their accuracy. If children read quickly but are inaccurate, then they will not be able to read with comprehension. As we have stated earlier, children reading at a speed of less than 90 words per minute are unlikely to be able to construct an accurate mental model of what they are reading as they read: the cognitive load is too high.

Use the narrative data from these assessments to work out where children need additional practice to gain fluency. Often multi-syllable words and words with graphemes that have alternative pronunciations such as 'ow' as in 'follow' and 'crown' hinder fluency.

Some children read at speed to the detriment of their accuracy and they become more accurate and fluent in their reading just by slowing down. If children are taught to read smoothly and fluently as opposed to quickly, then this can easily be overcome.

Children who can read the final fluency assessment at 60–70+ words per minute are ready to exit the Little Wandle programme, and do not need to read any more of our fully decodable books. They have sufficient fluency and secure phonic knowledge to tackle any book at age-related expectations.

Using the reading rate to check children are at the correct level book

The reading rate gives you a reliable reading speed that takes into account accuracy as well as words read. In general, we are looking for a reading rate that shows the cognitive load is light for the child. We want them to be growing in confidence and speed over the books that they read in Phase 5. The reading speed is just one indicator of the text being the correct level for the child, but it does give an indication of growing fluency. If a child is within the thresholds below they are on the correct level book, so long as the accuracy rate is at least 90%.

Thresholds for reading rates at the levels are:

Phase 5 set 3: 40–50+ words per minute

Phase 5 set 4: 50–60+ words per minute

Phase 5 set 5: 60–70+ words per minute.

Using the accuracy rate to check children are at the correct level book

Children should have an accuracy rate of at least 90% for the book to be at the correct level for them. If children have an accuracy rate below 90%, then they do not have enough fluency in reading the GPCs and words at the level they were tested. This could be a barrier to progress and affect the child's confidence. Try a book from a previous level and see if it is a better match for the child.

Year 1 fluency assessment: Spring 2 (Phase 5 set 3)

Teacher's mark sheet

Child's name: _____

| | Word count |
|---|------------|
| The giant splash woke up Gecko, and he | 8 |
| jumped in fright! Gecko smacked right into | 7 |
| Hippo's shoulder! Hippo was so shocked she | 7 |
| started bellowing. Hippo's bellowing frightened | 5 |
| a herd of buffaloes. They panicked! The | 7 |
| buffaloes thundered across to the trees. They | 7 |
| woke up sleepy Chimp. The tree started to | 8 |
| shake, and Chimp fell out. "What's going on?" | 8 |
| he yelled. "Don't blame us!" said the buffaloes | 8 |
| crossly. "It was Hippo!" Hippo frowned at | 7 |
| Gecko. "Don't blame me!" said Hippo grumpily. | 7 |
| "Gecko smacked into my shoulder!" | 5 |
| | (84 total) |

Reading rate (number of words read correctly in one minute) (A)

Total number of words read/attempted (B)

Accuracy rate (proportion of words read accurately) $\frac{\text{A}}{\text{B}} \times 100 = \text{ } \%$

The giant splash woke up Gecko, and he jumped in fright! Gecko smacked right into Hippo's shoulder! Hippo was so shocked she started bellowing. Hippo's bellowing frightened a herd of buffaloes. They panicked! The buffaloes thundered across to the trees. They woke up sleepy Chimp. The tree started to shake, and Chimp fell out. "What's going on?" he yelled. "Don't blame us!" said the buffaloes crossly. "It was Hippo!" Hippo frowned at Gecko. "Don't blame me!" said Hippo grumpily. "Gecko smacked into my shoulder!"

Year 1 fluency assessment: Summer 1 (Phase 5 set 4)

Teacher's mark sheet

Child's name: _____

| | Word count |
|--|-------------|
| "Your acorns were here," said a little squirrel | 8 |
| above them, pointing triumphantly at a hole. | 7 |
| Hazel, Conker and Cashew bustled over to take a | 9 |
| look ... but the hole was empty. "Where are our | 9 |
| acorns?" asked Cashew. "I hid them somewhere | 7 |
| else," said the little squirrel. "That's not fair. Those | 9 |
| are our acorns ..." cried Conker. "You couldn't | 7 |
| work as a team, so you lost the acorns. I found | 11 |
| them by myself," said the little squirrel. Hazel, | 8 |
| Conker and Cashew snuggled close, imagining a | 7 |
| cold, hungry winter. The little squirrel paused, | 7 |
| considering a cold lonely winter. "I have plenty of | 9 |
| acorns, but nobody to share them with ..." | 7 |
| | (105 total) |

Reading rate (number of words read correctly in one minute) (A)

Total number of words read/attempted (B)

Accuracy rate (proportion of words read accurately) $\frac{\text{A}}{\text{B}} \times 100 = \text{ } \%$

“Your acorns were here,” said a little squirrel above them, pointing triumphantly at a hole. Hazel, Conker and Cashew bustled over to take a look ... but the hole was empty. “Where are our acorns?” asked Cashew. “I hid them somewhere else,” said the little squirrel. “That’s not fair. Those are our acorns ...” cried Conker. “You couldn’t work as a team, so you lost the acorns. I found them by myself,” said the little squirrel. Hazel, Conker and Cashew snuggled close, imagining a cold, hungry winter. The little squirrel paused, considering a cold lonely winter. “I have plenty of acorns, but nobody to share them with ...”

Year 1 fluency assessment: Summer 2 (Phase 5 set 5)

Teacher's mark sheet

Child's name: _____

| | Word count |
|---|------------|
| Dot watched Lucian and Macy play with the ball. Until ... | 10 |
| “Oh no!” cried Lucian. “Now what are we going to do?” | 11 |
| The ball had rolled straight into a tiny space behind the | 11 |
| ice-cream stall. Lucian and Macy ran over to Dot. “Please | 10 |
| can you help us?” asked Macy. “We knocked the ball | 10 |
| behind the ice-cream stall.” “You are small, Dot. Can you | 10 |
| reach it for us?” asked Lucian. Dot wasn't sure what to | 11 |
| do. What if the ball wouldn't budge? What if she got | 11 |
| stuck behind the ice-cream stall? Dot wanted to be | 9 |
| helpful, so she got down on her hands and knees and | 11 |
| peered into the darkness. Dot knew she had to be brave | 11 |
| ... so she wriggled into the tiny space. | 7 |

(122 total)

Reading rate (number of words read correctly in one minute) (A)

Total number of words read/attempted (B)

Accuracy rate (proportion of words read accurately) $\frac{\text{input}}{\text{input}} \frac{(A)}{(B)} \times 100 = \text{input} \%$

Dot watched Lucian and Macy play with the ball. Until ...

“Oh no!” cried Lucian. “Now what are we going to do?”

The ball had rolled straight into a tiny space behind the ice-cream stall. Lucian and Macy ran over to Dot. “Please can you help us?” asked Macy. “We knocked the ball behind the ice-cream stall.” “You are small, Dot. Can you reach it for us?” asked Lucian. Dot wasn’t sure what to do. What if the ball wouldn’t budge? What if she got stuck behind the ice-cream stall? Dot wanted to be helpful, so she got down on her hands and knees and peered into the darkness. Dot knew she had to be brave ... so she wriggled into the tiny space.