



Timed Oral Reading

What is it?

Timed oral reading is an instructional strategy designed to improve students who are not fluent readers by reading and re-reading instructional level text under timed conditions.

Who is it for?

Timed oral reading is intended to build automaticity and expression for accurate, but slow readers, while improving a student’s overall reading rate to positively impacting reading comprehension. It has a strong evidence base of impact, especially for striving readers and multilingual learners.

When do I use it?

Timed oral reading should be implemented at least three times a week for 15-20 minutes.

How do I implement it?

Implementation Step	Instructional Materials	Teacher and Student Actions
Step 1: Text Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50–200-word passage at instructional level 	Select a text that is between 50-200 words in length that is at the instructional level for students who are accurate, but slow. Add a running word count to the passage in the right margin. Optimally, students would be able to read the selected passage with at least 85% accuracy on the first read.
Step 2: Preparing to Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fluency graph for monitoring progress and goal setting 	<p>Review student fluency rates and establish a goal that is ambitious, yet achievable to accelerate student progress. For guidance on goal setting, see How Do I to Set Meaningful Goals?</p> <p>In a small group, establish the learning intention for the lesson. An example learning intention could be: “I can increase the number of words I read correctly in one minute on each timed reading of the passage. I can show progress towards my goal of reading XX words in a minute.” Share with each student their current reading rate and their desired goal.</p>



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		<p>Next, preview the passage with the students by introducing the title. Assign students to work in partners taking turns reading the passage in one-minute intervals.</p>
<p>Step 3: First Read</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 copies of passage in clear sheet protector • Whiteboard marker • Fluency graph • Timer for each pair • Pencil 	<p>As students work in pair, listen in, collect formative assessment data, and provide corrective feedback and praise.</p> <p>One student serves as the reader and one student serves as the coach. The coach will time the reader and record any errors. After one-minute is up, the coach adds a bracket after the last word read.</p> <p>Then, the coach calculates the number of errors and number of words read correct. To do so, they take the total number of words read and subtract the total number of errors (Words Read – Errors = Words Read Correct). The reader records their words read correct and errors on their graph and charts them.</p> <p>The coach reviews the errors the reader made by taking them back into the text and providing the word or using decoding strategies to help the reader decode the word. The reader then rereads the word(s) and the entire sentence.</p> <p>Once scores have been recorded and graphed, and errors reviewed then the students switch roles.</p>
<p>Step 4: Additional Readings</p>		<p>Students should repeatedly read the text until they reach the desired goal. This optimally occurs within three to four reads.*</p> <p>After students have completed their multiple reads, revisit the learning</p>



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	<p>intention of the lesson and have students reflect on their success towards their goal. Students can talk about what worked well, what they might do differently next time, etc. Let the students know they will be doing this a few times a week to continue to work on improving their reading rate while maintaining their accuracy to achieve their goal.</p> <p>*Note: If student does not meet goal after 3-4 reads, move on to a new passage in the following session as research shows there is minimal benefit in any more reads of that same passage.</p>
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How Do I Set Meaningful Goals?

To establish meaningful goals with students, you will first need to know their instructional level. You can use oral reading fluency (ORF) measures, like Acadience Reading, DIBELS 8, or other grade level reading passages like those found in the [Assessing Multiple Measures](#) book to do the assessment.

To determine the instructional match for the text used for timed oral reading, you will need to conduct a survey level assessment with ORF grade level passages. For a survey level assessment, you will start with grade level text and work downward, testing the student successively at earlier grade levels as needed. You will keep testing until you find that the grade level of text that the student is reading at or above the 25th percentile, but below the 50th. You can use Table 1(below) that shows Hasbrouck and Tindal (2017) norms to identify the reading rate's percentile.

Let's look at an example.

It is the beginning of the year, and you are serving as a third-grade teacher. You have a student who is accurate but slow in their reading rate. To help them improve their reading speed and expression you want to try timed oral reading. First, you tested the student with a 3rd grade ORF passage. The student read 38 words correctly in one minute. This puts them just below the 10th percentile according to the Hasbrouck and Tindal Norm chart. So, you



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proceed to administering a one-minute ORF at a 2nd grade level. At that level, the student read 77 words correct which puts them at the 25th percentile using spring of 2nd grade scores. So, this means, that 2nd grade level text is the best instructional match for practicing timed oral reading. The student will use 2nd grade passages until they meet the spring rate of 2nd grade at the 50th percentile or reads 100 words correct. Once they hit the goal once or twice, you can move them into 3rd grade level passages.

Now, that you have identified what level of passage and desired target, the next step is to set the meaningful goal that is timebound. In looking at the last column in the norms chart, you can see what the average weekly improvement for a student at that grade and percentile is. Given that you are trying to accelerate learning, you will need to set goals that are more ambitious than average.

So, going back to our 3rd grade student example who was reading 77 words per minute on 2nd grade level text, if you want them to move into 3rd grade level text by the middle of the year and close the gap, then you need to get them to the 50th percentile in 2nd grade which is 100 wcpm.

Let's look at what that goal would look like over a 12-week time period.

The 3rd grader is reading 77 words correct per minute (wcpm) which puts them at the 25th percentile on 2nd grade level text. To accelerate their reading progress, you set a goal that by the middle of the year, approximately 12 weeks out, that they will be at 100 wcpm (the 50th percentile per the spring rate in 2nd grade). This means the student needs to gain 23 words in 12 weeks, or about 2 words a week. Now, this is ambitious as the average third grader gains about 1 word a week, but if you want to close the gap a bigger gain is needed. On their reading fluency tracker, you will mark their current rate (77 wcpm) and plot 12 weeks out their goal rate (100 wcpm). Then, you will draw a line connecting the two dots to show the expected progress needed to achieve the goal at the end of the designated time period (see Figure 2 below for an example and an adjustable template can be found [here](#)). The green line is called the "aim line" and helps students to see where they need to get to each week to stay on track to achieve their goal.



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Timed Oral Reading Fluency Tracker

Name _____ Goal Desired: 100 wcpm Goal Date Expected: Dec. 15

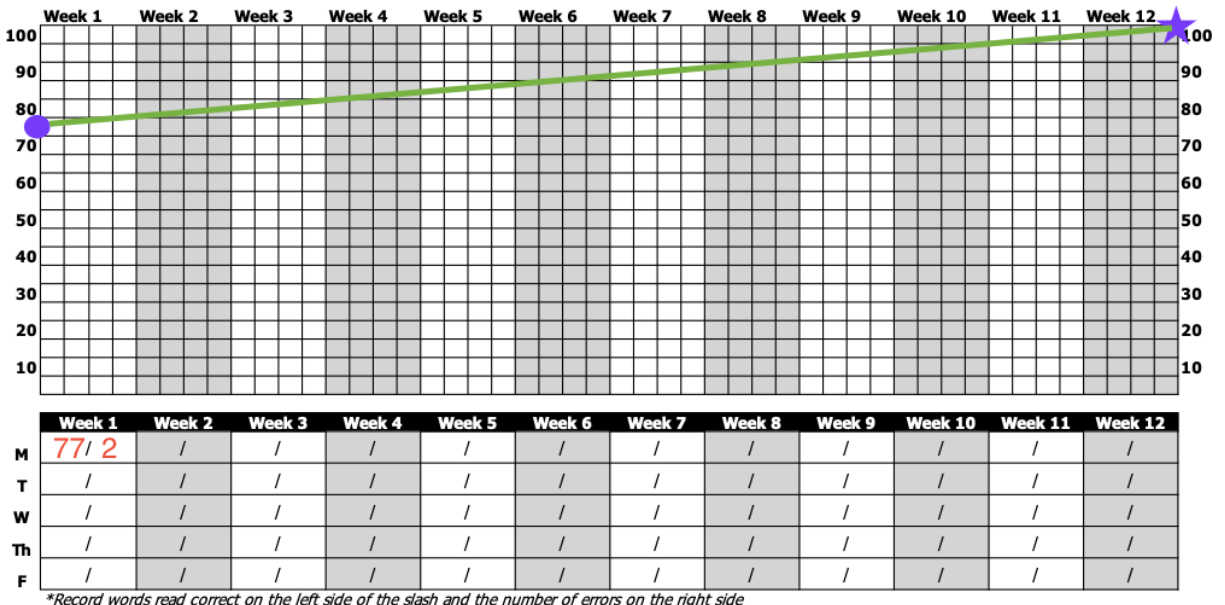


Figure 2. Fluency Tracker Chart with Goal and Aim Line

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Table 1. Hasbrouck and Tindal Oral Reading Fluency Data (2017)

Grade	Percentile	Fall WCPM*	Winter WCPM*	Spring WCPM*	Avg. Weekly Improvement**
1	90		97	116	1.2
	75		59	91	2.0
	50		29	60	1.9
	25		16	34	1.1
	10		9	18	0.5
2	90	111	131	148	1.2
	75	84	109	124	1.3
	50	50	84	100	1.6
	25	36	59	72	1.1
	10	23	35	43	0.6
3	90	134	161	166	1.0
	75	104	137	139	1.1
	50	83	97	112	0.9
	25	59	79	91	1.0
	10	40	62	63	0.7
4	90	153	168	184	1.0
	75	125	143	160	1.1
	50	94	120	133	1.2
	25	75	95	105	0.9
	10	60	71	83	0.7
5	90	179	183	195	0.5
	75	153	160	169	0.5
	50	121	133	146	0.8
	25	87	109	119	1.0
	10	64	84	102	1.9
6	90	185	195	204	0.6
	75	159	166	173	0.4
	50	132	145	146	0.3
	25	112	116	122	0.3
	10	89	91	91	0.1

*WCPM = Words Correct Per Minute

**Average words per week growth



Frequently Asked Questions

How do I set the stage the first time?

Explain to students that the goal of doing timed repeated reading is 1) to read the text accurately, 2) to read the text at about the speed of oral language, and 3) to make the reading sound like language (Shanahan, 2017). To improve these three things, we will practice reading a passage multiple times to improve our reading accuracy, rate, and expression. When we read more accurately and with greater rate, we can complete our reading faster and with better understanding.

Where can I find potential passages?

There are numerous resources, without a little formatting, that you can use for passages including: your CORE ELA program materials, excerpts from trade or picture books, or novels, [ReadWorks](#), [CommonLit](#), Achieve the Core Fluency Passages for [Grades 2-3](#), [4-5](#), or [6-8](#), or [NewsELA](#).

Where can I watch a video of what this looks like?

A great video created by REL Southeast of Timed Oral Reading between a student and a teacher is available at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=65&v=8q2mvF6K6M&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.readingrockets.org%2F&source_ve_path=Mjg2NjQsMzY4NDIsMjg2NjY

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