

# 5 Steps

to Assess Your Student's  
Reading Skills



*Rooted in Language*

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*Use this tool to -*

- ✓ Discover your student's current reading level
- and*
- ✓ Determine if additional help is needed

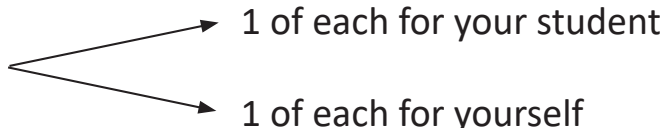


## Before you begin -

Pick TWO reading passages for your student to read aloud. Consider these general guidelines when deciding on your selections:

- Choose passages that you think your student can read without help.
- Choose passages with age or grade appropriate vocabulary.
- Choose each passage's length based on the chart below:

| Grade Level | Passage Length for Step 1 | Passage Length for Step 3 |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1           | Approx. 25 words          | Approx. 100 words         |
| 2           | Approx. 50 words          | Approx. 200 words         |
| 3           | Approx. 75 words          | Approx. 300 words         |
| 4 & up      | Approx. 100 words         | Approx. 400 words         |

- Make 2 copies of each passage 
  - 1 of each for your student
  - 1 of each for yourself
- Have a timer ready for Step 3.

**Note:** See the Appendix on p. 11 for ideas on finding an appropriate passage.

# 1. Measure reading accuracy

Read this page carefully before you begin. Use the Step 1 passage you selected.

Hand 1 copy of the passage to your student. Keep the second copy for yourself to mark any errors as described below.

Ask your student to begin reading aloud. On your copy, mark any errors using the following notations:

## TYPE 1 ERROR

GUESSES THE WORD

(Ex: Student reads *house* instead of *horse* or *standing* instead of *stands*)

Put a slash through every word your student guesses incorrectly, even if it's a partial guess.

Sample Text: *The ~~horse~~ stands alone in the field.*

Sample Text: *The horse ~~stands~~ alone in the field.*

## TYPE 2 ERROR

OMITS/ADDS WORDS

(Ex: Student skips the word *the* and substitutes the word *a*)

Put an *X* through every word your student skips. Write in words they add or substitute.

Sample Text: *The horse stands alone in <sup>a</sup>~~the~~ field.*

## TYPE 3 ERROR

SOUNDS OUT INCORRECTLY

(Ex: Student sounds out *f-i-l-d* and says *filled* for *field*)

Put a circle around every word your student sounds out incorrectly.

Sample Text: *The horse stands alone in the (field).*

## NO ERROR

SOUNDS OUT OR RECOGNIZES THE WORD

Count the number of words in the passage: \_\_\_\_\_

Minus the total number of errors: \_\_\_\_\_

Equals total correct words: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Identify reading strategies

Using the results from Step 1, determine your student's reading strategies and record types of errors.

### Problematic reading strategies include these habits:

- Looks at whole "word shape" and guesses based on visual similarities (Ex: Student reads *who* for *how* or *that* for *what*)
- Looks at only the first few letters and guesses at the whole word (Ex: Student reads *stand* for *stumbling* or *unhappy* for *unhealthy*)
- Substitutes a word that could work based on context clues (Ex: Sentence says, *My dog Sammie is my best companion.* Student reads, *My dog Sammie is my best friend.*)
- Substitutes small "inconsequential" words or skips difficult words (Ex: Sentence says, *I saw the gray dog again.* Student reads, *I saw a gray dog again.* Ex: *I can read his face accurately when he's angry.* Student reads, *I can read his face when he's angry.*)

### Strong reading strategies include these habits:

- Chunking one syllable at a time for longer words (Ex: *fan-tas-tic*)
- Sounding-out one sound at a time (Ex: *u-n-d-er*)
- Being flexible with vowel pronunciations when the first attempt doesn't yield a familiar real word (Ex: Student reads *ac-cur-ATE*, then repeats with correct adjustment of pronunciation, *accurate.*) Note that if the word is unfamiliar, students won't know to correct their initial pronunciation.

Look over your markings from your student's reading and count the number of slashes (Type 1 Error), X's (Type 2 Error), and circles (Type 3 Error) and enter each total below. Use these observations to understand the kind of skill practice your student needs.

|                     |
|---------------------|
| <b>TYPE 1 ERROR</b> |
| GUESSES THE WORD    |
| Total # of guesses: |
| _____               |

|                           |
|---------------------------|
| <b>TYPE 2 ERROR</b>       |
| OMITS/ADDS WORDS          |
| Total # of skipped words: |
| _____                     |

|                        |
|------------------------|
| <b>TYPE 3 ERROR</b>    |
| SOUNDS OUT INCORRECTLY |
| Total # of misreads:   |
| _____                  |

### 3. Check reading rate

Read this page carefully before you begin. Use the longer Step 3 passage you selected.

- Hand 1 copy of the passage to your student. Keep the second copy for yourself to mark when 1 minute is completed.
- Ask your student to begin reading aloud. Start the timer as they begin.
- Mark your copy to indicate the last word they read at the 1 minute mark.
- Count how many words the student read in 1 minute and record in the green box. Use the guidelines below to determine if your student's current rate of reading is "sufficient."

| Grade Level            | Necessary Reading Rate* | Sufficient Reading Rate** |
|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| end of 1 <sup>st</sup> | 60 WPM                  | 91 WPM                    |
| end of 2 <sup>nd</sup> | 100 WPM                 | 124 WPM                   |
| end of 3 <sup>rd</sup> | 112 WPM                 | 139 WPM                   |
| end of 4 <sup>th</sup> | 133 WPM                 | 160 WPM                   |
| end of 5 <sup>th</sup> | 146 WPM                 | 169 WPM                   |
| end of 6 <sup>th</sup> | 146 WPM                 | 173 WPM                   |

\*50th percentile = necessary;  
\*\*75th percentile = sufficient  
(Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2017)  
**WPM** = Words Per Minute

**Reading Rate**

**Words Per Minute:** \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Determine fluency skills

Reading *fluency* is a combination of reading speed and reading accuracy.

**Fluency = rate + accuracy**

*“Fluent reading should sound like speech.”* ~Stahl & Kuhn

Follow these directions to complete the Fluency Skills Summary sheet (p. 8). For the level of text selected, record and analyze your student’s reading fluency, based on the following criteria:

- The student’s independent reading accuracy score
  - Research supports the need for 97-98% accuracy for full comprehension.
- The student’s reading strategies—either strong habits or problematic habits
  - Use your observations of your student’s specific types of errors (p. 5) to inform your understanding of the student’s current reading strategies.
- The student’s independent reading speed (rate)
  - Use the chart on p. 6 to determine the student’s Sufficient Reading Rate based on age/grade-level.

**THE GOAL FOR INDEPENDENCE IS HIGHLY ACCURATE READING,  
USING GOOD STRATEGIES AT A SUFFICIENT SPEED  
TO SUPPORT COMPREHENSION.**

**Note:** This 5-Step Assessment should be used periodically to determine appropriate independent reading material and measure progress over time.

# Fluency Skills Summary

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Student's Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

Text selection from: \_\_\_\_\_

## Reading Accuracy Score ( %) - Use with Step 1:

**Total # of correct words (p. 4):** \_\_\_\_\_

**÷ by # of words in passage (p. 4):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Equals % correct:** \_\_\_\_\_

Check the appropriate box:

**Passage is an appropriate reading level**  
(97% or higher)

**Passage is too difficult**  
(96% or lower)

## Reading Strategies - Use with Step 2:

**Total # of errors (p. 4):** \_\_\_\_\_

Check the appropriate box:

**Uses strong reading habits**  
3 or less total errors (observe type)

**Uses problematic reading habits**  
4 or more total errors (observe type)

## Reading Rate (WPM) - Use with Step 3:

**# of words read in 1 minute (p. 6):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sufficient Reading Rate based on student's grade level** \_\_\_\_\_

Check the appropriate box:

**At or above expectations**

**Below expectations**



## 5. Interpret results & decide on next steps

What do the results mean for your student's reading?

| What the Assessment Revealed | Often Results in . . .                       |
|------------------------------|--|
| good rate + good accuracy    | Reading that supports comprehension & growth |
| good rate + weak accuracy    | Reduced comprehension                        |
| weak rate + good accuracy    | Weak stamina & interest                      |
| weak rate + weak accuracy    | Frustration & avoidance of reading           |

### Determining your student's current independent vs. challenge reading level:

**If the student scores 97-98% accuracy or above,** uses strong reading strategies, and can read at a sufficient rate, the passage level most likely represents their current independent reading level. Work at this level for independent student reading practice and skill practice. Challenging text is slightly above this level. Students should read challenging text with educator support to practice strong reading strategies and advance their reading skills.

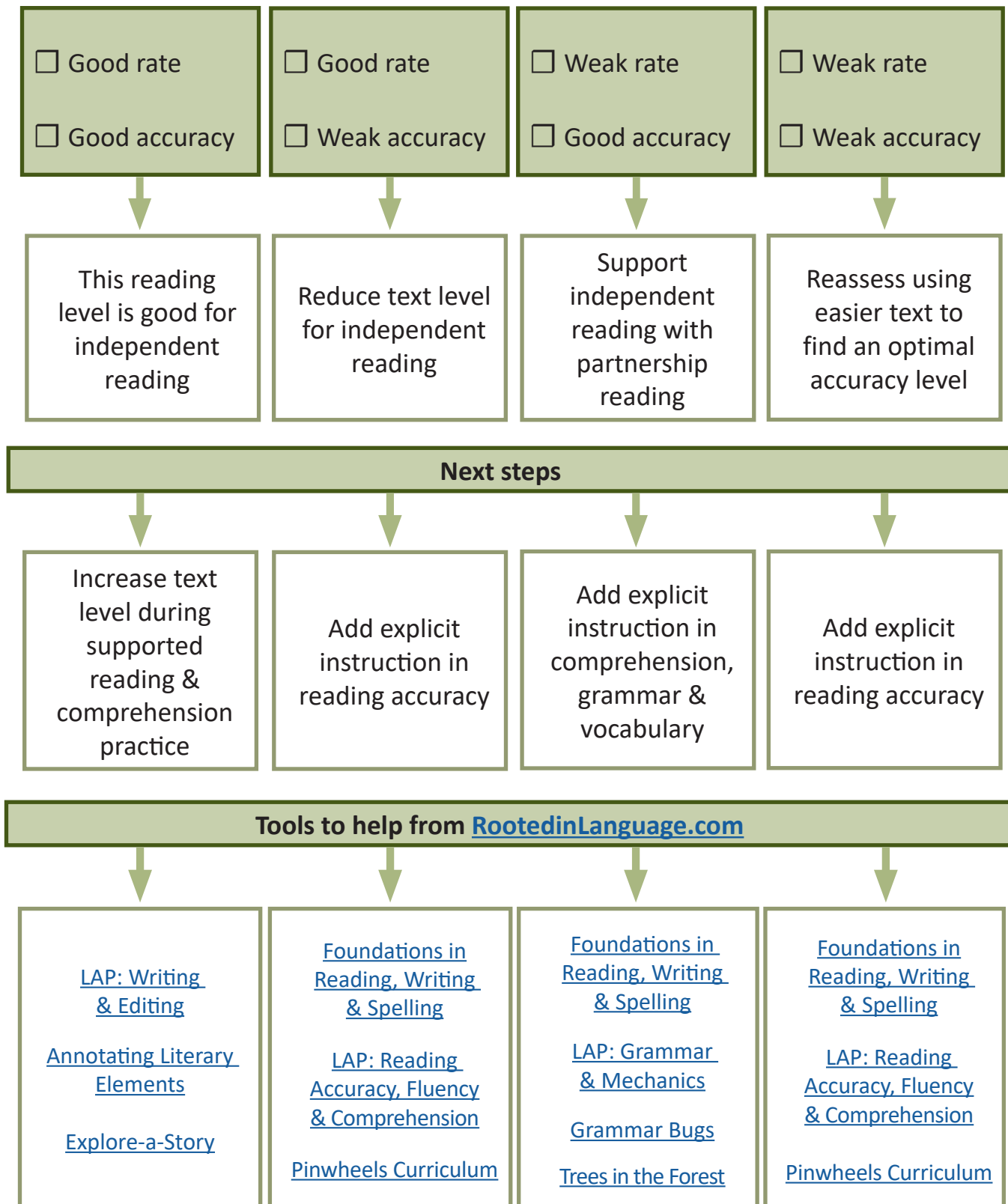
**If the student scores 96% accuracy or below,** try the assessment again with an easier reading level. If your student's reading skills continue to be an area of concern, consider the suggestions below to provide explicit practice, growing necessary reading and writing skills.

**If the student's reading skills continue to be problematic,** explore the following suggestions or consult a professional. Each type of reading error must be addressed with explicit instruction and practice.

[To schedule a consultation with Rooted in Language, visit our website](#)

# Responses & next steps -

Check your student's reading skills:



# Appendix

## Finding an appropriate passage -

- For passage suggestions and to understand recommended grade-level reading, look up your state's "Reading Exemplars" by grade level (see sample provided below from the state of Ohio reading exemplars).
- Try Scholastic.com for reading suggestions grouped by grade level.
- Select a passage from an existing story at home or at the library that meets the criteria listed on page 3. Make sure it is **NOT** text that your student is overly familiar with or has memorized.

## Sample Passage

(from *Winnie the Pooh*; 2nd-3rd grade—Ohio Exemplar - 146 words)

He climbed and he climbed and he climbed, and as he climbed he sang a little song to himself. It went like this:

Isn't it funny  
How a bear likes honey?  
Buzz! Buzz! Buzz!  
I wonder why he does?

Then he climbed a little further ... and a little further ... and then just a little further. By that time he had thought of another song.

It's a very funny thought that, if Bears were Bees,  
They'd build their nests at the bottom of trees.  
And that being so (if the Bees were Bears),  
We shouldn't have to climb up all these stairs.

He was getting rather tired by this time, so that is why he sang a Complaining Song. He was nearly there now, and if he just stood on that branch ...

Crack!

"Oh, help!" said Pooh, as he dropped ten feet on the branch below him.