

# Measures of Prosody/Expression

The best way to assess a student's prosody or expression is to listen to a student read a grade-level passage and to then judge the quality of the reading using a rubric that scores a student on the elements of expressive reading. Listed below are two different scales that can be used to assess fluent reading.

## NAEP Fluency Scale

This four-level scale was first developed for the 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading (Daane, Campbell, Grigg, Goodman, and Oranje, 2005). This scale focuses on the level of skill a student demonstrates in phrasing and expression while reading aloud.

The assessment involves a teacher listening to an individual student read a passage aloud, the educator rates the student's reading according to the level that best describes the student's overall performance on various aspects of expressive reading.

National Assessment of Educational Progress Fluency Scale		
Fluent	Level 4	Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the story. Preservation of the author's syntax is consistent. Most of the story is read with expressive interpretation.
Fluent	Level 3	Reads primarily in 3-4 word phrase groups. Majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Little or no expressive interpretation is present.
Non-Fluent	Level 2	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some 3-4 word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings are awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage.
Non-Fluent	Level 1	Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasional 2-3 word phrases may occur- but infrequent and/or do not preserve meaningful syntax.

Source: White, S., Sabatini, J., Park, B. J., Chen, J., Bernstein, J., & Li, M. (2021). The 2018 NAEP Oral Reading Fluency Study. NCES 2021-025. National Center for Education Statistics.

## Multidimensional Fluency Scale

The following scales rate reader fluency on dimensions of expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. Scores range from 4 to 16. Generally, scores below 8 indicate that fluency may be a concern. Scores of 8 or above indicate that the student is making good progress in fluency.

Dimension	1	2	3	4
<b>Expression and Volume</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ expression matches meaning</li> <li>✓ varied volume, intonation, and tone</li> <li>✓ reads with confidence</li> <li>✓ natural sounding</li> </ul>	Reads words as if simply to get them out. Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural language. Tends to read in a quiet voice.	Begins to use voice to make text sound like natural language in some in areas of the text but not in others. Focus remains largely on pronouncing the words. Still reads in a quiet voice.	Makes text sound like natural language throughout the better part of the passage. Occasionally slips into expressionless reading. Voice volume is generally appropriate throughout the text.	Reads with good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text. Varies expression and volume to match his or her interpretation of the passage.
<b>Phrasing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ reads in phrase-by-phrase chunks</li> <li>✓ Attention to punctuation in intonation and pauses</li> </ul>	Reads in monotone with little sense of phrase boundaries; frequently reads word-by-word.	Frequently reads in two- and three-word phrases, giving the impression of choppy reading; improper stress and intonation fail to mark ends of sentences and	Reads with a mixture of run-ons, mid-sentence pauses for breath, and some choppiness; reasonable stress and intonation.	Generally reads with good phrasing, mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to expression.

		clauses.		
<b>Smoothness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Smooth sounding with flow</li> <li>✓ Accurate word recognition</li> <li>✓ Minimal hesitations</li> <li>✓ Self-corrects</li> </ul>	Makes frequent extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound-outs, repetitions, and/or multiple attempts.	Experiences several “rough spots” in text where extended pauses or hesitations are more frequent or disruptive.	Occasionally breaks smooth rhythm because of difficulties with specific words and/or structures.	Generally reads smoothly with some breaks, but resolves word and structure difficulties quickly, usually through self-correction.
<b>Pace</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reads automatically</li> <li>✓ Reads effortlessly</li> <li>✓ Pace matches text (rate)</li> </ul>	Reads slow and laboriously.	Reads moderately slowly.	Reads with an uneven mixture of fast and slow pace.	Consistently reads at conversational pace; appropriate rate

Source: Zutell, J., & Rasinski, T. V. (1991). Training teachers to attend to their students' oral reading fluency. *Theory Into Practice*, 30, 211–217.