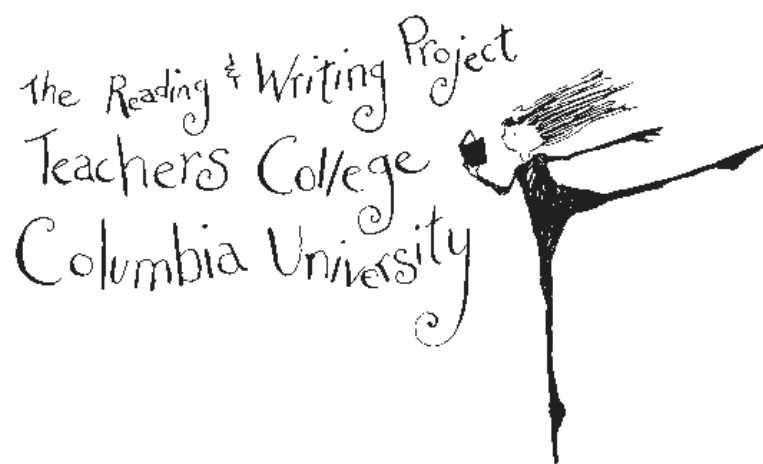


Teachers College Reading and Writing Project  
Levels L-Z Reading Level Assessments

## Levels L-Z Reading Assessment



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**This assessment was created with the input and dedication of a team of teachers, administrators, coaches and staff developers. Special thanks to those who traveled, emailed, typed, proofread, field tested, and just plain helped out.**

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**Scoring Guide for Reading Assessments**

**What factors determine the student's independent reading level?**

Three factors should be checked when assessing a reader (Allington, 2001):

1. Accuracy and self corrections
2. Comprehension
3. Fluency and Expression

**How accurate does the student's reading need to be?**

96%-100% -- Easy (Independent Reading Level)

90%-95% -- Scaffolded Instruction Level (Books for small group work)

Below 90% -- TOO DIFFICULT (Frustration Level)

**How do I calculate the student's accuracy rate on a passage?**

The student's accuracy rate is the percentage of words the student read correctly. This can be calculated using the following formula:

(Number of words – miscues) ÷ number of words = percentage of accuracy

Number of words minus errors divided by number of words equals percentage of accuracy

Example:      120 words – 9 miscues = 111 words correct  
                    111 words correct / 120 words = 92%

To make scoring easier, we have calculated the accuracy rates for each passage on the teacher copies of the running record form. You will just need to count the miscues and circle the accuracy rate. Do not count the miscues that the student self-corrected.

**What is the self-correction ratio?**

Self-corrections can tell us if a student is monitoring for comprehension by rereading a word or sentence (without teacher prompting) to fix mistakes (Cunningham, 2004) While we have chosen not to include a designated box for recording the self-correction ratio, if you would like to calculate self-correction ratio, use the directions below.

A good self-correction rate is: 1:1, 1:2, 1:3, 1:4, 1:5. The ratio 1:3 is read as follows:  
“The reader corrected one error in every three errors.”

**How do I calculate the student's self correction ratio?**

The student's self correction ratio is simply the ratio of total miscues to self-corrected miscues. This can be calculated using the following formula:

Errors + Self-corrections ÷ Self-corrections = Self-Correction Ratio

(Errors plus self-corrections divided by self-corrections equals Self correction Ratio)

Example:      9 errors + 8 self-corrections ÷ 8 self-corrections = 1:2 Self-Correction Ratio  
                    The ratio is read as follows: “The reader corrected one error in every two errors.”

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### **How do I assess whether the student could comprehend the passage?**

In order to judge comprehension, students are asked to retell the text and then answer several comprehension questions. Students need to give a strong retelling or answer three of the four comprehension questions correctly in order to read independently at that level. *Students may use the text to help them retell and teachers should take note if the student needs this. Don't prompt a student to refer to the text.* Guidelines to assess retelling and suggestions are provided on the teacher copies of the assessment forms.

In this assessment we have included two literal questions and two inferential questions at each level from levels L-Z. The student must answer at least one inferential question at these levels, as readers at these levels must be able to make inferences in order to understand their texts.

For levels R-Z we have included optional sheets for students to complete a written retelling and written responses to the questions. A teacher may opt to complete all or any part of these sections orally, depending on teacher preference and the needs of the student.

### **How do I assess the student's fluency and expression?**

We have included suggestions for observing fluency alongside the teacher's running record form. Students must be able to read the text fluently, without long pauses or breaks between words (Rasinski, 2003).

### **How do I arrive at the final level?**

If a student can do the following he or she can read a text level independently:

Read a text with 96% accuracy

Read with comprehension

Read with the fluency behaviors required at that level

Be sure to continue assessing until you reach a level beyond that which the student can read independently as this reading will provide you with miscues enough to analyze patterns and learn ways to help the reader.

*Assess the student for their highest independent level. Don't stop at the first level the student is able to read independently.*

Suppose a student reads a level L text independently, meeting all of the criteria above. Try the level M text and if the accuracy rate is 96%, continue and assess the comprehension and the fluency. If the student's comprehension and fluency is in place, move on to the N. If you try the Level N text and the accuracy rate is 95% or lower, or if the comprehension is not sufficient, this means the student will not read independently at level N. In the end, teachers want to find the highest level that a student can read independently. That is, the reader has an accuracy rate of 96% or higher, comprehension (either a strong retelling or at least three correct comprehension questions), and fluency.

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**How to Administer Levels L-Z Text Assessment**

**1. ESTIMATE THE STUDENT’S READING LEVEL**

Estimate the student’s independent reading level before beginning the text assessment, so that you do not need to start from the beginning.

Some ways to estimate (you do not need to do all of these):

- Use last year’s running records or assessment data and start from there.
- Ask the student to find a book in the classroom library that he or she feels is “just right” and read a short passage to you. Count the number of miscues. If it is over five words on a page, the text is too difficult.

**2. PREVIEW THE PASSAGE**

*What to look for:* Note that the Teacher Copy and the Student Copy are different. The Teacher Copy is designed to make recording the student’s reading, counting the number of words read, and taking notes easier to do. It is not meant for the student to read from. A number of factors on the Teacher Copy make the text more difficult for the student to read from, and would not give an accurate assessment of the student’s reading. The student must read from the Student Copy.

The text on the Teacher Copy is marked with a word count every 100 words for the teacher’s convenience. There is also an area to the left for you check off observations and to make notes regarding the student’s fluency, expression and any thing else you might notice as the student reads.

Note that for level R and above the directions for asking the student to retell the passage include the option of asking the student to write the retelling. The forms for written responses are attached to the Teacher Copy of the assessment. *The written responses are optional – any student can complete the responses orally.* Often oral responses are preferable since a student will typically say more than he or she will write.

The Student Copy is marked with a line at the end of the sentence containing the first 100 words, so that the student will not have to stop in the middle of a sentence to read silently.

Preview the passage and comprehension questions on the Teacher Copy before you ask the student to read from the Student Copy. There are samples of responses for each comprehension questions available on our website. You should preview these as well, to be sure you are familiar with a few acceptable responses to each question.

*Why are there two text sets? How can I use the two text sets?*

- You should start with the texts from Set 1.
- If the student has read the text from Set 1 before, you should use the text from Set 2.
- You should start with the student’s current independent level, meaning the student may have used Set 1 the last time they were assessed.

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- Remember, it is possible that last year’s teacher may have used the text from Set 1 to find the student’s level the previous year. It is also possible that the text was read aloud to the student or read at home.
- If you are interrupted in the midst of conducting the assessment, you may use the text from Set 2 to start fresh.
- If you find reason to doubt the results of your assessment from the text in Set 1, you may use the text in Set 2 as back up.
- Only use the text from Set 2 if necessary, so that the next time the student is assessed, there will still be a text at the student’s independent level that the student has not seen before.

### 3. INTRODUCE THE TEXT

Read the book introduction exactly as it is written in the Teacher Copy of the assessment. Be sure that the student hears and comprehends the entire book introduction. You may read it more than once if necessary, but do not adapt the words.

Example of a book introduction from Level R, Set 1:

**Book Introduction:** *Say this to the reader before he or she begins the student copy of the text:* “In this passage from *Zeely*, by Virginia Hamilton, Elizabeth and her brother John are being dropped off at the train station by their parents, Mr. & Mrs. Perry. Elizabeth and her brother are going on a trip without their parents. Please read aloud the first section (*Point to the line on the student copy to show the student where the first section ends.*) After this part, you may read the rest silently. If you need to, you can reread the first part. When you are finished reading, I will ask you to talk about the big or important things that happened in the story.”

### 4. RECORD THE STUDENT’S MISCUES

Be sure to record a check-mark above each word the student reads correctly.

If the student reads or says something other than what is on the page, it is important to record it just above the word that appears in the text. This is called a miscue. Don’t decide “oh, this doesn’t really matter” and neglect to record that miscue! Your record needs to be accurate. Included in this packet are a set of codes to use for different kinds of miscues (substitutions, repetitions, etc.) As the student reads from the Student Copy of the text, the teacher marks any miscues in the first 100 words by writing every miscue above the text in the Teacher Copy. You can make additional notes during and after the student’s reading in the boxed area to the left of the text. After the student has made 6 or 7 miscues, you will probably ask him or her to stop because you’ll have plenty of miscues to analyze if this turns out to be the reading you’ll study and certainly this is not the reader’s independent level. That many miscues in the first 100 words means the text is too difficult.

Example of recording the student’s miscues from Level R, Set 1:

**Running Record:** *For the first 100 words, record the reader’s miscues (or errors) above the word as he or she reads. Later, you may or may not code them, using miscue analysis (MSV). Stop when the student has made five miscues and go back to the previous level.*

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ great/SC ✓ asked ✓ ✓ ✓ pile-ars ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓  
“Aren’t train stations just grand?” she said. “Look at those pillars – I bet they’re all of

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✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ← R ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓  
three feet around. And the windows! Did you ever see anything so very high up?"

### 5. ASK THE STUDENT TO READ THE REST SILENTLY

After the student has read 100 words aloud, you may ask him or her to read the rest silently. You also have the option of allowing the student to continue reading aloud. As the student reads, you can make notes regarding the student's reading behaviors in the area to the left of the text on the Teacher Copy. (Some teachers start another assessment with a second student while the first student is reading silently. This is a time-saver.)

Note: The teacher copy is marked with word counts, after every 100 words. Please notice that you should wait until the end of a sentence before asking the student to read silently. The Student Copy is marked with a line at the end of the sentence after 100 words.

Example of Teacher Copy with 100 words marked and directions to read silently:

It was Mrs. Perry who remembered there was a train (*100 words*) to catch. "Oh, my! Hurry, you two!" she said to John and Elizabeth.

\*\*\*\*\* (Reader may read silently from this point on) \*\*\*\*\*

### 6. RETELLING OR SUMMARY

When the student is finished reading the passage, the teacher reads the directions from Literal & Inferential Retelling or Summary section of the Teacher Copy to the student. The student retells the excerpt.

Some tips for retelling or summary:

- *The student may look at the text as a reference while retelling if needed, but not be encouraged to look back.* The student should not retell verbatim from the text. If this happens, prompt the student to put it in his/her own words.
- As the student talks about the text, record his/her response carefully. It is important to transcribe everything the student says so that it is available to reference (as a reminder or to share with a parent, future teacher of the student, etc.) Listen for any parts of the response that answer the Comprehension Questions Section of the assessment. Check off the questions that the student answered through retelling/summary and count them as correct in the final score. *You do not need to ask the student any of the Comprehension Questions that he/she already answered while retelling.*
- If the student gives a very brief retelling, you may use prompts such as, "Anything else?" or, "Say more about that," or even, "Tell me all the big things that happened." Make a note of any prompts you give.
- Note whether the student's retelling was a literal retelling, or an inferential retelling.

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- Most importantly, note whether the student’s retelling expressed the main things that happened and gist of the text.
- *As the student retells or summarizes, note whether he or she answered any of the Comprehension Questions in their retelling. You do not need to ask the student the questions if the retelling already answered them.*
- Use the Retelling Rubric to determine if the student’s response was acceptable. Score the response *after* administering the entire text assessment.

### 7. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

*Only if the student’s retelling did not already include the answers to the questions, does the teacher ask the student to answer the questions in the Comprehension Questions Section.*

If the student’s retelling or summary included the answers to one or more of the Comprehension Questions, mark the question as answered correctly.

The reader must answer at least three of these questions correctly to determine if this is the student’s independent reading level. Try an easier text if the student could not answer at least three of these questions correctly (including the information from the student’s retelling).

Example of the Comprehension Questions Section:

**Comprehension Questions Section:** *Analyze the student’s retelling/summary to see if it contains information that answers each question below. If a question was not answered in the retelling, ask it and record the student’s response.*

1. *Literal Question:* What are some of the directions Mrs. Perry gives to John?

2. *Literal Question:* What did Elizabeth’s mom say to John that made Elizabeth smile and hold her head up?

3. *Inferential Question:* Who do you think is the older sibling – Elizabeth or John? What makes you think this?

4. *Inferential Question:* How do you think Elizabeth feels going on a trip by herself with her brother?

### OPTIONAL WRITTEN RETELLING AND COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

As an option, the teacher may give the directions for the written retelling and comprehension questions at levels R or above. If the student is writing the retelling, the teacher should stay nearby to observe the student.

*If the student’s written retelling or answers to the comprehension questions are unsatisfactory, then the teacher should ask the student to explain his or her responses aloud and record the responses on the Teacher Copy. If the student is able to correctly answer the questions aloud,*

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*“count” those responses instead.*

**8. FINAL “SCORE”**

Answer the four questions at the end of the assessment. *The text is at the student’s independent level only if the answer is yes to all four “Final Score” questions.* Take into consideration that the text is only one short example of the kind of text the student will encounter at this level. The teacher may decide to use another text for additional assessment. If you find it necessary to do multiple running records with the student, you may consider meeting with the student more than once, even several times, rather than conducting them all in one sitting.

*It is important to note that you should find the student’s highest independent level. Continue trying more difficult texts until you have found the highest level the student can read independently.*

Example of Final Score Questions:

***Final Score***

***Yes No Was the reader’s accuracy rate at least 96%?***

***Yes No Did the reader read with fluency?***

***Yes No Did the reader correctly answer at least 3 questions in the Comprehension Questions Section?***

***Yes No Did the retelling/summary express the important things that happened in the text?***

Is this the student’s independent reading level?

- If you did **NOT** answer "yes" to all four questions in this **Final Score** box, try an easier text. Keep moving to easier texts until you find the level at which you are able to answer "yes" to all four questions in the **Final Score** box.
- If you circled 4 "yes" answers in this **Final Score** box, this student is reading strongly at this level. However, it is possible that the student may also read strongly at a higher level. Keep moving to higher passages until you can no longer answer “yes” to all four questions. The highest level that showed strong reading is the independent reading level. For example, you might find that you answered "yes" to all four questions in the **Final Score** box for level P, then a "yes" to all four questions for level Q, but only three "yes" answers for level R. Level Q is the highest passage on which you were able to answer "yes" to all four questions in the **Final Score** box. Level Q is the current independent reading level for that student.

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**Reading Volume Assessment Directions**

Purpose: The amount of time any individual spends with a book or any type of reading material in and out of school can significantly affect the reading rate and the fluency of a reader. Not only that, but it also increases the vocabulary, general knowledge of the world, verbal ability, and academic achievement (Cunningham).

One of the strongest predictors of reading comprehension in general and vocabulary development in particular is the amount of time students spend in reading to themselves. A major reason for the powerful relationship is that books are much more likely to contain the vocabulary, text structures, and complex sentence patterns students tend to encounter in all books.

An assessment of volume should include:

- A look at their reading level
- How many books the student is reading everyday
- The number of pages the student reads per day
- How much reading occurs at home vs. how much reading occurs in school
- How many minutes/hours the student takes to read the book
- It may be necessary to take into account the amount of time the students spends writing notes or responses on Post-its or in a reading notebook

“Reading rate guidelines must be applied with caution because a number of factors will influence rate. For instance, oral reading is slower than silent reading. The reading rates for younger studentren are typically established form oral reading activity while the rates for older studentren are established from silent reading activity. But younger studentren may exhibit little difference in oral and silent reading rates, while for older students that gap should be quite substantial” (Allington, 2006, p. 92).

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**Reading Volume Chart**

If a student is reading ... (silently)	Level	Approximate number of words	Reading Rate: Words Per Minute	Approximate time to read this book
Henry and Mudge (Rylant)	J	800-1000	100 WPM	8-10 Minutes
Horrible Harry (Kline)	L	4500	100 WPM	45 Minutes
			200 WPM	25 Minutes
Magic Tree House Series (Osborne)	M	6000	100 WPM	60 Minutes
			200 WPM	30 Minutes
Henry Series (Cleary)	O	25000	100 WPM	4 hours
			200 WPM	2 hours
Howliday Inn (Howe)	P	30000	100 WPM	5 hours
			200 WPM	2 ½ hours
Stone Fox (Gardiner)**	P	12000	100 WPM	2 hours
			200 WPM	1 hour
Hundred Penny Box (Bell Mathis)	Q	6000	100 WPM	60 minutes
			200 WPM	30 minutes
Hatchet (Paulsen)**	R	50000	100 WPM	8 hours
			200 WPM	4 hours
Missing May (Rylant)**	W	24500	100 WPM	4 hours
			200 WPM	2 hours

\*\*Allington (2006, p. 92)

Grade	WPM	Grade	WPM
1	60-90	6	195-220
2	85-120	7	215-245
3	115-140	8	235-270
4	140-170	9	250-270
5	170-195	12	250-300

*\*\* Reading rates for students in grades 1 and 2 rates may still be determined through oral reading, however after that these rates should be for silent reading.*

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**What Is A Running Record?**

Johnston (2000) states that running records of oral reading are basically a vehicle for error analysis. He says the teacher must engage in the imaginative challenge of figuring out the logic of error. For teachers, the most useful aspect of errors is that people do not make them randomly. There is always a reason for them. If you can figure out the reason, then you know where best to use your instructional expertise and how to avoid confusing the student (p. 1).

Many teachers of reading record the student’s oral reading using a consistent set of conventions.

Johnston, P. (2000). *Running Records: A Self-Tutoring Guide*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

<b>Sample Conventions for Coding Reading Errors</b>	
<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Convention shown with error.</b>
Substitution	<u>walked</u> Today I went to my new school. <span style="float: right;">Scored as an error.</span>
Self-correction	<u>walked</u>  SC Today I went to my new school. <span style="float: right;">Scored as a self-correction.</span>
Repetition	Today I went to my $\longleftrightarrow$ R new school. <span style="float: right;">NOT scored as an error, but should be noted.</span>
Repetition with self-correction	<u>walked</u>  R SC Today I went to my new school. <span style="float: right;">Scored as a self-correction.</span>
Omission	Today I <u>    </u> went to my new school. <span style="float: right;">Scored as an error.</span>
Insertion	Today I went to <u>see</u> ^ my new school. <span style="float: right;">Scored as an error.</span>
Long Pause	Today I went to my new school. # <span style="float: right;">NOT scored as an error.</span>
Told	Today I went   <u>    </u> . T to my new school. <span style="float: right;">Scored as an error.</span>



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Analysis:

- In the picture, a furry creature is biting the part of Alex's body where his hand is located.
- But, the substitution of hand is not visually similar to finger. They have no letters/sound relationships in common and "finger" is a longer word.
- It is an acceptable English language structure substitution to say "hand" for "finger." Therefore, this substitution also includes attention to structure cues. The use of meaning and structure cues in making substitutions often overlap.

### What are structure (syntactic) cues?

#### (Oral language vs. book language.)

Structure cues are determined by the word order or "syntax" of the words in a sentence. Therefore, the student using structure cues would ask, "Does it make sense to say it that way," "Does it sound right to say it that way," and "Is that how it should sound in a book?"

One must remember, however, that the language structures used in text often differ from the studentren's understanding of their native language.

(The following example comes from the Kaeden book, My Tiger Cat, page 5.)

Text:           when she tries to catch a mouse.

Reader         √    √    goes  √   √   √   √  
Response:                tries

Analysis:

- "when she goes. . ." This substitution is a good English language construction. Since analysis takes place up to and including the error, it does sound right to say, "when she goes. . ."
- But, the substitution does not match the visual (graphophonic) cues in tries.
- In this case, it even has meaning to say, "when she goes to catch a mouse." Because meaning and structure cues overlap so much that it is very difficult to find a substitution that is due to structure only.

### What are visual (graphophonic) cues?

Visual cues are one source of information the reader uses to read the author's text. Visual cues are the spaces between words, the letters (upper and lower case forms), size of the print, punctuation marks, and the way the print is placed on the page.

Visual cues *are not* cues the student gains by looking at the picture. Information contained in illustrations are meaning cues. Although you use vision to look at an illustration, the information contained in illustrations is regarded as a source of meaning.

To determine if a reader was attending to visual cues, the teacher would analyze the substitution to determine if it looks like the printed text.

(The following example comes from the Kaden book, The Clown, page 5.)

TEXT:           Put   on   your   hair.  
Reader's  
Response:       √    √    √    her  
  hair

Analysis:

- The substitution of "hat" for "her" looks similar. The student appears to be using the first letter of the word, and possibly the last letter.
- The substitution does not make use of meaning cues from the story or picture (i.e. The new thing added to the clown's costume is hair).
- The substitution does not make sense.

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**Oral Reading Fluency**

<b>Fluent</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	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 text. Preservation of the author’s syntax is consistent. Most of the text is read with expressive interpretation.
	<b>Level 3</b>	Reads primarily in three or four-word phrase groups. Some small groupings may be present. However, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Some expressive interpretation is present; this may be inconsistent across the reading of the text.
<b>Non fluent</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage. Beginning a little expressive interpretation, frequently first seen when reading dialogue.
	<b>Level 1</b>	Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasional two-word or three-word phrases may occur—but these are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax. No expressive interpretation.

Adapted from: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Oral Reading Study

Estimations of words per minute that are appropriate for different grade levels vary according to researchers. Tim Rasinski (2004) suggests that by the middle of the school year third-graders should read around 70-100 words per minute (wpm), fourth-graders around 80-120 wpm, and fifth-graders 100-140 wpm. However, this should not be the only determinant of a student’s reading fluency as some students who are able read words quickly may fail to read with phrasing and intonation (and may also have weak comprehension). It may be more helpful to measure a students’ reading rate (words per minute) periodically throughout the school year as a way to assess growth.

**Oral Reading Fluency Target Norms**

Grade	Winter (mid-year) (WPM)
3	70-100
4	80-120
5	100-140

*Source:* Adapted from “AIMSweb: Charting the Path to Literacy,” 2003, Edformation, Inc. Available at [www.aimsweb.com/norms/reading\\_fluency.htm](http://www.aimsweb.com/norms/reading_fluency.htm). Data are also adapted from “Curriculum-Based Oral Reading Fluency Norms for Students in Grades 2 Through 5,” by J. E. Hasbrouck and G. Tindal, 1992, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 24, pp. 41-44.

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Levels L-Z Reading Level Assessments

**Moving Students to a New Independent Reading Level**

When a child achieves above 96% accuracy with adequate comprehension, it is time for the child to move to the next level. We recommend putting scaffolds in place to support the student as s/he moves into the new level. A guided reading group is one great support for students as they tackle texts that are a bit challenging. But there are other ways, as well, to provide support:

1. Set the child up to read at least the first book at a new level in a same-book partnership.
2. Suggest that the child alternate between books at the new level and books at the previous one, and that the child keep books from both levels in his/her book baggie.
3. Provide the child with book (or chapter) introductions. These can be very helpful, especially when they include the characters, important vocabulary and the gist of the text.
4. Reread the first chapter aloud to the child, or set up a parent or more experienced classmate to do so, and then engage in a conversation about that chapter. Having a strong start on a text is very helpful. It may also be helpful to read aloud other chapters.
5. If possible, suggest that the child's second book at a new level be one that is within the same series (for fiction) as the first book or on the same topic (for nonfiction). This way, the first book will support the child's work with the next.





