

Oral Reading Check Guidance

The oral reading check allows teachers to assess their pupils' oral reading fluency and comprehension. It should be used as an assessment to inform future teaching, rather than any kind of summative 'test'.

Each check features around 200 words of text taken from an engaging book. The exact word count is provided on the teacher's copy of the check text. Texts were analysed using the Catile text difficulty tool to ensure appropriateness: [Text Difficulty Analyzer - Catile - Cathoven AI](#)

The multi-dimensional fluency scale (MDFS) is used to assess reading fluency. This gives a holistic picture of pupil fluency using statements across four areas: expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. More information about teaching and assessing fluency can be found in *The Megabook of Fluency* (2nd Edition, 2025) by Timothy V. Rasinski and Melissa Cheesman Smith.

It is also important to focus on a pupil's pace of reading using a measure of words correct per minute (WCPM). It is often best to record the pupil's reading for fluency analysis and WCPM score, rather than doing this 'in the moment'.

It should be noted that there is a marked difference between reading rates for silent and oral reading. We read more quickly in our heads than out loud. However, developing mastery in oral reading fluency translates directly to strong silent reading.

Approximate oral reading rates are given below for the end of each year group. These should not be taken as targets to hit, but as broad indicators.¹

Year group	Approximate oral WCPM to attain fluency in an age-appropriate text (end-of-year indicator)
Year 2	90
Year 3	100
Year 4	115
Year 5	125
Year 6	130+

There are two checks for each year group. These could be used at different points of the year to gauge progress. An additional check has been provided for Year 6 pupils in case useful.

Why have the Year 5 and Year 6 WCPM indicators changed?

In November 2024, FFT published "the first large scale data on oral reading fluency in England".² These data have influenced our thinking and allowed us to consider the current picture within the English school system, whereas previous work has largely been in an American context.

Of the Year 6 pupils in the study, 95% of those reading at or above 130 WCPM attained the expected standard in their key stage 2 reading test (SAT). 52% of Year 6 pupils reading at 130+ attained the higher standard (greater depth). This is a very striking correlation within a dataset of thousands of pupils. With limited time available in schools, time on oral fluency assessment is best spent on those pupils whose fluency could be a limiting factor in their reading success, both academically and for pleasure. With this in

¹ Informed by *The Megabook of Fluency* by Rasinski and Cheesman Smith, Hasbrouck and Tindal's fluency norms (<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/fluency-norms-chart-2017-update>), <https://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk/blog/a-field-guide-to-reading-fluency> and [FFT-FFF-Reading-Fluency-Report-final-Nov-24.pdf](#)

² [FFT-FFF-Reading-Fluency-Report-final-Nov-24.pdf](#)

mind, the Year 6 score has been amended to 'at or above 130 WCPM' as a good indicator of fluency. In the FFT data, 114 was the 50th percentile (median) score for Year 6 in the summer term and the 75th percentile score was 144.³ In this context, 130+ is a reasonable indicator, and allows attention to be focused on Year 6 pupils reading below this. **If a pupil is reading aloud above 130, but scoring poorly within test papers, the issue will probably lie not in fluency, but in another area.**

The Year 5 WCPM score has been changed slightly in light of the FFT data, which records a median of 111 at the end of Year 5 and a 75th percentile score of 133.

As ever, we are keen to stress that these scores are indicators only.

Carrying out the check

This process can be adapted as you wish using your professional judgement.

Carry out the check with an individual pupil in a quiet space free from distractions. It is often best to record the pupil's reading on a device for fluency analysis and WCPM score, rather than doing this 'in the moment'.

- Explain to the pupil that we will be doing some reading to help us understand how we can get even better.
- Read and discuss the context of the text with the pupil (on teacher copy) and hand them their pupil copy.
- If you are tracking using the MDFS, ask the pupil to read the text to you aloud and, as they read, annotate the rubric as appropriate (or record the pupil's reading on a device and review later).
- If you are tracking using WCPM, ask the pupil to read the text to you aloud as you time a minute (or record the pupil's reading on a device). The approximate year group rate is indicated by a red word. Subtract the total number of errors from the total number of words read in one minute. An error includes any word that is omitted, mispronounced, or substituted for another word.⁴
- Ask the pupil to read the text again, or read it to them, before the comprehension element.
- As you work through the questions, note pupil responses and use informal follow-up questions to probe understanding where appropriate. Possible pupil responses are given, but look for pupil understanding rather than verbatim 'right answers'. Encourage pupils to refer to their copy of the text.
- At the end of the check, calculate the WCPM or MDFS values and note any strengths and targets.

³ 75th percentile scores taken from Christopher Such's 2025 book, *Primary Reading Simplified*, p. 204

⁴ WCPM procedure drawn from this source: <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/understanding-and-assessing-fluency>