

Levels L-Z
Reading Assessment
Teacher Resources and Guidebook



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TCRWP – Levels L-Z Reading Assessment

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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).

Taking running records involves four basic steps.

1. Recording the child's oral reading using a set of conventions.

Set of Conventions for Coding Reading Errors	
Behavior	Convention shown with error.
Substitution	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>walked</u></p> <p>Today I went to my new school.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Scored as an error.</p>
Self-correction	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>walked</u> SC</p> <p>Today I went to my new school.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Scored as a self-correction.</p>
Repetition	<p style="text-align: center;">←→</p> <p>Today I went to my R new school.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">NOT scored as an error, but should be noted.</p>
Repetition with self-correction	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>walked</u> R SC</p> <p>Today I went to my new school.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Scored as a self-correction.</p>
Omission	<p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p>Today I went to my new school.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Scored as an error.</p>
Insertion	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>see</u></p> <p>Today I went to ^ my new school.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Scored as an error.</p>
Long Pause	<p style="text-align: center;">#</p> <p>Today I went to my new school.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">NOT scored as an error.</p>
Told	<p style="text-align: center;">——— .</p> <p>Today I went T to my new school.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Scored as an error.</p>

2. Determining the sources of information (Meaning, Structure, or Visual) the reader used to make an error, and, if self-correction occurred, the sources of information added to correct the error.
3. Considering the child's use of M, S, and V in light of the reading process—this requires using just enough of each source of information to accurately interpret the author's message.
4. Making teaching decisions based upon the reader's needs as determined by the analysis in 2 and 3 above.

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

Scoring Guide for Reading Assessments

Three factors should be checked when assessing a reader:

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

Accuracy:

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

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

Below 90% -- TOO DIFFICULT (Frustration Level)

Betts (1946) suggests 98% or higher for Independent Reading, 95-97% for Scaffolded Instruction, and 94% or lower for Frustration Level. Other researchers give different levels. We have chosen the levels above.

Scoring accuracy:

(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%

The accuracy rates have been calculated for you on each running record form. You will just need to count the miscues and circle the accuracy rate. Do not count the miscues that the child self-corrected.

Self-correction Rate:

Self-corrections tell us if a child is monitoring errors and re-sampling text to self-correct errors. This is one indication of comprehension and monitoring “book language.” 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.”

Scoring Self-Corrections:

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.”

Comprehension:

In order to judge comprehension, students are asked to retell the text and then answer 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. Guidelines to assess retelling and suggestions are provided on individual forms.

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

At levels L-Q readers will retell the important parts of the text and answer the comprehension questions orally. For levels R-Z we have included 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.

Fluency:

We have included suggestions for observations and notes regarding fluency alongside the running record. Students must be able to read the text fluently, without many long pauses or breaks between words. See information below.

How do I arrive at the final level?

If a student can do the following they can read a text level independently:

- Read a text with 96% accuracy
- Read with comprehension
- Read with some fluency behaviors required at that level

Assess the child for their highest independent level. Don't stop at the first level the child 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 both of these are acceptable, they will read level M text independently. If you try the Level N text and the accuracy rate is 95% or lower, or if the comprehension is not sufficient, they 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.

Reading Fluency: Pace, Parsing, and Prosody

FLUENT READERS:

- Focus their attention on making connections among ideas in the text and their background knowledge
- Recognize words and comprehend at the same time
- Divide words into meaningful chunks so that they are able to read with expression.
- Score higher on comprehension assessments

NON-FLUENT READERS:

- Focus their attention primarily on decoding individual sounds or words
- Spend their energies trying to “figure out” the words not the meaning
- Read in a slow, deliberate, and labored manner often pausing at inappropriate places Score lower on comprehension assessments
- Fluency and automaticity are often interchanged, however they are not the same thing.

Fluency means reading with accuracy, pacing (automaticity), and expression (prosody). *"The fluent reader sounds good, is easy to listen to, and reads with enough expression to help the listener understand and enjoy the material."* (Clark, Read All About It, p. 282)

Automaticity is the fast, effortless recognition of words that comes with a great deal of reading practice. *"As a result of extended practice, an important change takes place: students learn to decode the printed words using significantly less attention. Because they require so little attention for word recognition, they have enough left over for comprehension."* (Samuels, Schermer, Reinking, Read All About It, p. 269)

Parsing: To parse text means to break it up into smaller parts, or breaking up ordinary text. Parsing involves reading phrases and/or clauses by dividing the text into chunks. Reading phrase units rather than conventional text does seem to result in improved fluency (Kuhn and Stahl, 2000).

Prosody is the ability to read in a manner that sounds like normal speech. Voice intonation and expression needs to mirror normal speech. In addition, prosody is the ability to read a text orally using appropriate pitch, stress, and juncture, and to project the natural intonation and phrasing of the spoken word upon the written text. Prosodic cues are the structure of the text and language, which help students identify the appropriate pitch, stress, and juncture to be assigned to a given text.

Moving Children to a New Independent Reading Level

When a child achieves above 96% accuracy with adequate comprehension, moving to the next level is in order. It is recommended, however, that scaffolds be put in place to support the student in moving into the new level. Guided reading is not necessarily an option when students are reading higher levels (i.e. L, M, N, ...). Strategy lessons can be used, but we want children to become independent in approaching more difficult text.

Several suggestions are listed below to help with this transition. Share them with participants, and ask for other suggestions we can add to the list.

1. Read books at the new level with a partner already at that level.
2. Teachers should question the priorities they have for children in the new level (e.g. initially, back off from expecting higher level comprehension than the student was able to achieve at the previous level).
3. Conference with the student about how they are handling the new level. This can provide information for teaching during the conference, or designing strategy lessons for the student and others like him or her.
4. Use “transitional baggies” which include a few unread books from the previous level with books from the new level.
5. Since a higher load of unknown vocabulary words is possible at the new level, make sure that extra instruction is provided in how to determine the meaning of an unknown word from the mood or the flow of the story as well as using the context of the sentence in which the word appears.

Reading Level Equivalency Chart

TC Groups	Guided Reading Levels	Reading Recovery Levels	DRA Levels	Benchmarks
1	A, B	1-2	A-2	A Birthday Cake (Cowley) I Can Write (Williams) Cat on the Mat (Wildsmith)
2	C, D	3-5	3-4	Rain (Kaplan) Fox on the Box (Gregorich)
3	D, E	6-8	6-8	It Looked Like Spilt Milk (Shaw) I Like Books (Browne) Mrs. Wishy Washy (Cowley)
4	F, G	9-12	10-12	Rosie's Walk (Hutchins) The Carrot Seed (Krauss) Cookie's Week (Ward)
5	H, I	13-16	14-16	George Shrinks (Joyce) Goodnight Moon (Brown) Hattie and the Fox (Fox)
6	J, K	17-18	18-20	Danny and the Dinosaur (Hoff) Henry and Mudge (Rylant)
7	J, K, L	18-19	18-24	Nate the Great (Sharmat) Meet M&M (Ross)
8	L, M	19-20	24-28	Horrible Harry (Kline) Pinky and Rex (Howe) Arthur Series (Marc Brown) Judy Moody series (McDonald) Magic Treehouse series (Osbourne)
9	M, N, O	20-22	28-34	Amber Brown (Danziger) Ramona Quimby, Age 8 (Cleary) Secrets of Droon series (Abbott) The Babysitters Club series (Martin)
10	P, Q	23-24	38-40	James and the Giant Peach (Dahl) Fudge-a-mania (Blume) Felita (Mohr) Time Warp Trio series (Scieszka)
11	R, S	25-26	40-44	Shiloh (Naylor) The Great Gilly Hopkins (Paterson) Dive series (Korman) From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler (Konigsburg) Because of Winn-Dixie (DiCamillo)

12	T, U, V	27-29	44	Bridge to Terabithia (Paterson) Baby (MacLachlan) Baseball in April (Soto) Handbook for Boys (Myers) Goosebumps (Stine)
13	W, X, Y			Missing May (Rylant) Where the Red Fern Grows (Rawls) The Skin I'm In (Flake) Ella Enchanted (Levine) Crash (Spinelli) Freak the Mighty (Philbrick)
14	Z			A Day No Pigs Would Die (Peck) Holes (Sachar) Scorpions (Myers) The Giver (Lowry) Tears of a Tiger (Draper)
15				The Golden Compass (Pullman) The Dark is Rising (Cooper) A Wizard of Earthsea (Le Guin) Miracle's Boys (Woodson)

Guidelines for Volume of Reading

If a child is reading a book such as...	Their reading level will be:	Their books are apt to contain approximately this many words:	A child reading this level of books reads within these ranges:	Bearing in mind this child's reading rate and the length of the books, a child reading at this level will require this much time to complete a 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	16 hours
			200 WPM	8 hours
Missing May (Rylant)**	W	24500	100 WPM	8 hours
			200 WPM	4 hours

**Allington (2000)

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

Harris and Sipay (1990)

“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 children are typically established from oral reading activity while the rates for older children are established from silent reading activity. But younger children may exhibit little difference in oral and silent reading rates, while for older students that gap should be quite substantial.” (Allington, 2000)

How to Administer Levels L-Z Text Assessment

1. ESTIMATE THE CHILD'S READING LEVEL

Estimate the child's independent reading level before beginning, 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 child to find a book in the classroom library that they feel is "just right" and ask them to read a short passage to you. Count the number of miscues. If it is over five words on a page, the level is most likely 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 child's reading, counting the number of words read, and taking notes easier. It is not meant for the child to read from. A number of factors on the Teacher Copy make the text more difficult for the child to read from, and would not give an accurate assessment of the child's reading. The child 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 a shaded area to the left for you to take notes regarding the child's fluency, expression and any thing else you might notice as the child reads.

Note that for level R and above the directions for asking the child to retell the passage include the option of asking the child to write the retelling.

The Student Copy is marked with a line at the end of the sentence containing the first 100 words, so that the child will not have to stop in the middle of a sentence to read silently. For levels R and above, the Student Copy includes an optional sheet for the child to write the retelling and answers to comprehension questions.

Preview the passage and comprehension questions on the Teacher Copy before you ask the child to read from the Student Copy.

Why are there two text sets?

- You should start with the texts from Set 1.
- If the child has read the text from Set 1 before, you should use the text from Set 2.
- You should start with the child's current independent level, meaning the child may have used Set 1 when the last time they were assessed.
- Remember, it is possible that last year's teacher may have used the text from Set 1 to find the child'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 child is assessed, there will still be a text at the child’s independent level that the child has not seen before.

3. INTRODUCE THE TEXT

Read the book introduction on the teacher copy of the assessment.

Example of a book introduction:

Book Introduction: *(Say this to the reader before he or she begins the student copy of the text)*
 “During a terrible rainstorm, Kate and her family hear a terrible crash. Please read aloud the first section. When you get to the line, you may read the rest silently. When you’re finished reading, I’ll ask you to retell what you read.”

4. RECORD THE CHILD’S MISCUES

When the child reads or says something other than what is on the page, it is important to record it. This is called a miscue. Included in this packet are a set of codes to use for different kinds of miscues (substitutions, repetitions, etc.) As the child reads from the Student Copy of the text, the teacher marks any miscues in the first 100 words by writing the child’s miscue above the text in the Teacher Copy. You can make additional notes during and after the child’s reading in the shaded area to the left of the text. After the child has made 5 miscues, you should ask the child to stop. Five miscues in the first 100 words means the text is too difficult.

Example:

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 child has made five miscues and go back to the previous level.*

el-ven/SC
mom
←

Shortly after eleven o’clock, Kate and her mother heard an engine chugging

5. ASK THE CHILD TO READ THE REST SILENTLY

After the child has read 100 words aloud, the teacher may ask the child to read the rest silently. The teacher also has the option of allowing the child to continue reading aloud. As the child reads, you can make notes regarding the child’s reading behaviors in the shaded area to the left of the text on the Teacher Copy. (Some teachers start another assessment with a second child while the first child 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 child 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:

The crash woke the children. They watched silently (**100 words**) as Kate pulled on a jacket and an old straw hat. Then she lit her father's railroad lantern.

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

6. RETELLING

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

Some tips for retelling:

- The child may look at the text as a reference while retelling if needed. However, the child should not retell verbatim from the text. If this happens, prompt the child to put it in his/her own words.
- If the child cannot retell the text in his/her own words, prompt them with the Comprehension Questions in the next section.
- If the child 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."
- Note whether the child's retelling was a literal retelling, or an inferential retelling.
- Most importantly, note whether the child's retelling expressed the main things that happened and gist of the text.
- As the child retells, note whether they answered any of the Comprehension Questions in their retelling. You do not need to ask the child the questions if the retelling already answered them.

Example of directions for retelling from the Teacher Copy:

Literal and Inferential Retelling

Say, "Retell the important parts of what you just read." Write notes regarding the student's retelling in this box and on the back of this page. If the reader has trouble getting started, prompt him/her to look at the text. Say, "What happened first?" Make a note that you prompted their retelling.

7. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Only if the child's retelling did not already include the answers to the questions, does the teacher ask the child to answer the questions in the Comprehension Questions Section. The reader must answer at least three of these questions correctly, to determine if this is the child's independent reading level. Try an easier text if the child could not answer at least three of these questions correctly (including the information from the child's retelling).

Example of the Comprehension Questions Section:

Comprehension Questions Section: Listen to the reader's retelling for the following information and take note of the reader's answers, based on the retelling. If the retelling did not already contain the following information, ask the reader the remaining questions and take note of the answers.

1. *Literal Question:* What happened in the story to cause the terrible cracking sound?
2. *Literal Question:* Why does Kate feel she must do something?
3. *Inferential Question:* What kind of work does Kate's father do? Support your answer with evidence from the story.
4. *Inferential Question:* Why is it important to stop the "midnight express" train?

The reader must answer at least three of these questions in order to determine if this is the child's independent reading level. Try another text if the child could not answer at least three of these questions.

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 child is writing the retelling, the teacher should stay nearby to observe the child. Stop the child if writing the retelling is

taking longer than giving the retelling aloud. If the writing appears to be taking longer than an oral retelling, the teacher may ask the child to retell the passage and answer the necessary comprehension questions aloud.

If the child's written retelling or answers to the comprehension questions are unsatisfactory, then the teacher should ask the child to explain their responses aloud and record the child's responses on the Teacher Copy. If the child is able to correctly answer the questions aloud, "count" those responses instead.

8. FINAL "SCORE"

Answer the four questions at the end of the assessment. The text is at the child'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 child 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 child, you may consider meeting with the child more than once, even several times, rather than conducting them all in one sitting.

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

Example of Final Score Questions:

		<i>Final Score</i>	
<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Was the reader's accuracy rate at least 96%?</i>	<i>If the answer is "Yes" to all four questions, this is the child's independent reading level.</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Did the reader read with fluency?</i>	
<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Did the reader answer at least three comprehension questions in the Comprehension Questions Section correctly?</i>	
<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Did the retelling express the important things that happened in the text?</i>	
* Continue trying more difficult texts until you have found the child's highest independent level. *			