

ASSESSMENT OF READING FLUENCY

Time pressure does not cause stuttering, but may create added anxiety in the moment. In addition, reading aloud can be quite stressful for those who stutter, mostly because they are worried about how others might react to their stuttering. Because of these issues, you may want to assess a child who stutters' reading fluency individually, away from others. Doing so will reduce pressure that is created by the test and/or the child's anticipation of listener reactions. The result is often a reduction in stuttering, which will allow you to gain a better picture of the child's decoding ability.

A child should not be penalized for moments of stuttering when assessing reading fluency. Fluency of speech is not the same as fluency of decoding. To gain a true assessment of reading fluency, videotape reading segments, time any moments of stuttering, and remove them from the overall time of reading.

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**National
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Changing the lives of people who stutter

The National Stuttering Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Since 1977, we have dedicated ourselves to bringing hope and empowerment to children and adults who stutter, their families, and professionals through support, education, advocacy and research.


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**STUTTERING
& FLUENCY
ASSESSMENT
FOR TEACHERS**

DISFLUENCY: A CONFUSING ISSUE.

ASSESSING READING FLUENCY IN A CHILD WHO STUTTERS

A child may appear not to know how to decode a certain word when in fact s/he does, but simply can't get it out due to stuttering.

WHAT MAKES IT CONFUSING

Certain types of speech disfluencies seen in children who stutter may appear similar to the hesitation s/he would show when having difficulty decoding a word. There are 3 types of disfluencies common in stuttering:

- **REPETITIONS**

A child repeats a sound or syllable, "I-I-like this," "like-like this," or "some-some-something like this".

- **PROLONGATIONS**

A child stretches out part of a word, "lllllike this," or "ssssomething like this," or "liiike this". This may or may not be accompanied by a slight shift in the child's pitch.

- **BLOCKS**

A child gets stuck on a word and cannot move forward. There are silent blocks, in which a child may just hesitate silently before saying a word. You may or may not see tension or struggle around the mouth or other parts of the body as the child is trying to get the word out. There are also audible blocks, when you may hear some struggle with a sound before a child gets the word out.

HOW DO I TELL THE DIFFERENCE?

Again, this can be confusing. A child may have a silent block, and it may appear they are hesitating because they cannot figure out the word. A child may repeat the first syllable of a word a few times, and again, it may sound like they are struggling to decode the word. A little detective work with the child will help you tell the difference between true stuttering and difficulties with reading fluency. Here are some things to look for:

- Observe how the child stutters in class in conversational situations. Once you start to see the child's speaking patterns, it will be easier to tell the difference between decoding difficulties and moments of stuttering.
- When the child is struggling with a word while reading aloud, look to see if there are any signs of tension in the face, mouth, or other areas of the body. This would likely indicate a moment of stuttering rather than a decoding issue.
- Work with the speech-language pathologist (SLP) at your school. He or she can assist you with the process of differentiating between stuttering and issues with reading fluency. You and your SLP can meet privately with the child and have him/her read aloud to you. If the child is able to identify moments of stuttering, s/he can raise a finger when s/he feels a stutter. This will help you and the child work together to note patterns and distinguish stuttering from decoding issues.

