

Timed Reading for Fluency

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Introduction

A well-organized language course provides opportunities for learning through communicative activities involving listening, speaking, reading and writing, deliberate study, and fluency development. The fluency development part of a course should take about one-quarter of the course time, and there should be fluency development activities for each of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

This series of books focuses on fluency in reading. Fluency involves making the best use of what you already know. That comes from working with familiar vocabulary and grammar, and from practicing using them in a comfortable way without having to struggle.

Seven Requirements of Fluency Development:

1. Familiar Material

Material for fluency development must be known and familiar. It should not involve unfamiliar language items or content too far removed from what learners already know. This is because to become fluent, learners need to focus on using material they already know well, not on learning new vocabulary or grammar. This is why the texts in these books are grouped into topic areas so that learners can read several texts about very similar information. Their familiarity with the topic will help them increase their reading speed.

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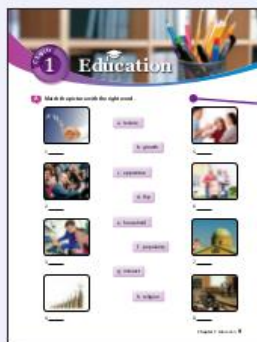
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2. Quantity of Practice

Another key requirement of a fluency development course is quantity of practice. Fluency develops by doing plenty of practice with easy material. That is why each book in this series contains a lot of reading texts. When learners have finished working through one book in the series, it is a good idea if they go back over the texts they have already read, trying to read them faster than they did the first time.



3. Controlled Vocabulary

Learners do not get fluent in reading by struggling through difficult texts with lots of unknown words. The books in this series are carefully written within a controlled vocabulary so that there is a minimum of unknown words. Words that might be unfamiliar to some learners are dealt with before the reading texts.

4. Limited Headwords

Book 1 is written within a vocabulary of 800 words, Book 2 within 1,100 words, Book 3 within 1,500 words, and Book 4 within 2,000 words.

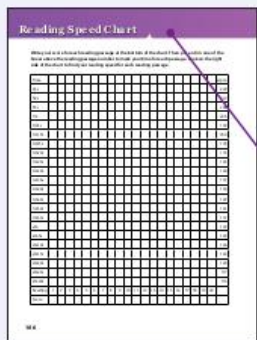
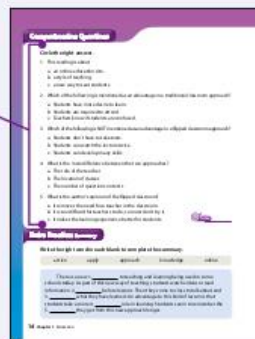


5. Pressure to Go Faster

A fluency development course will work well if there is some pressure to go faster when using the language. This series of books uses timed readings. When the learners read, they measure how long it takes them to do the reading, and they keep a record of their reading speed. Their aim is to increase their speed until it gets close to 250 words per minute.

6. A Focus on Comprehension

Fluency in reading not only involves speed of word recognition, but also involves comprehension. This is why the texts in these books are followed by questions. There is no value in reading faster if there is a big drop in comprehension.



7. Graphs to Chart Progress

At the back of each book there is a graph where learners should enter their reading speed for each text and their comprehension score. The learners' goal should be to make their reading speed graph keep going up.



A Match the picture with the right word.



1. _____

a. lecture

b. growth



5. _____



2. _____

c. apprentice

d. flip



6. _____



3. _____

e. household

f. popularity



7. _____



4. _____

g. interact

h. religion



8. _____

B Match the definition with the right word.

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. ___ to add to what others have put together or collected | a. educate |
| 2. ___ relaxed or casual; not formal | b. contribute |
| 3. ___ to want; to have a strong feeling for | c. intend |
| 4. ___ to plan to do | d. desire |
| 5. ___ to teach; to transfer knowledge and skills to | e. informal |

C Work with a classmate. Try to write three ideas for each box. Share your ideas with the class.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Homeschooling		
Using technology at school		



D Match each phrase to the right examples.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. ___ Things with obvious differences | a. vocational, public, private, home, religious |
| 2. ___ Ways to promote things | b. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism |
| 3. ___ Types of schooling | c. listen, watch, and work with a master or teacher |
| 4. ___ How kids interact | d. ads on TV or in newspapers; public lectures; word-of-mouth |
| 5. ___ Religions of the world | e. talking, doing things outdoors, playing online |
| 6. ___ Things one does while under apprenticeship | f. plants and animals; boys and girls; children and adults |

Proper Nouns to Know

Study these words that you will find in the readings for this chapter.

Chinese

Finland

China

YouTube



A Return to Homeschooling

Long ago, most children who were educated received their schooling at home. Then public schools came along, and children began to be educated in the classroom. These days, learning at home is growing again in popularity in countries that allow it.

Before the 17th century, almost all children were taught the things they learned at home.

- 5 There were very few schools, and the ones that existed were private and very expensive. If a child received an education at all, it was through homeschooling. Of course, that changed when public schools were introduced in the US in the 1600s. Parents didn't need to school their kids at home if they could send them to school to learn from a teacher. The parents were happy, even if the kids were not. Then, in the middle of the 20th century, some parents went
10 back to the old way of schooling their children. They became homeschoolers.

- Why would parents want to take their children out of school and keep them home for learning? There are several reasons for the move. Some parents just want to be more active in their children's education. They feel that a stronger tie is formed between family members if they learn and work together. Many parents homeschool for religious reasons. The first public
15 schools often had religious teaching in the classroom. That is no longer possible—at least in the US. These homeschool parents think that teaching religious beliefs is as important as teaching math and science.

- Whatever the reason, the number of students being homeschooled in the US is on the rise. Based on numbers from the US Department of Education, in 2007 there were about 1.5
20 million students being homeschooled. By 2011, the number had increased to almost 1.8 million. That is only about 3.4% of the total student population in the US, but the number is growing.

- Perhaps one of the main reasons that homeschooling is on the rise in the US is that parents are becoming smarter about homeschooling. Fifty years ago, parents who homeschooled were on their own. They had very little help outside of the family. Now there
25 are homeschool groups, visiting teachers, school textbooks, and even the Internet to guide parents through the sometimes difficult process. It is not likely that homeschooling will replace public schools, but the number of parents choosing it is likely to continue to grow.

Word Count 400 words



Comprehension Questions

Circle the right answer.

1. This reading is about
 - a. public schools.
 - b. religious teaching.
 - c. learning at home.
2. Why does the author think homeschooling is becoming more popular?
 - a. Students are not doing so well in school.
 - b. Parents know more about homeschooling.
 - c. Public schools are getting worse.
3. Which of these is NOT a reason parents homeschool their kids?
 - a. Public schools cost too much.
 - b. Religion can be taught.
 - c. Families become stronger.
4. How were most children educated before the 1600s?
 - a. In private schools
 - b. In public schools
 - c. At home
5. Which of the following statements would the author agree with?
 - a. It is easier for parents to homeschool children today.
 - b. It was much easier to homeschool children in the past.
 - c. It will become more difficult to homeschool children in the future.



Score _____

Extra Practice

Write the right phrase in each blank.

at least not likely private schools public schools student population

1. All children are allowed to study in _____.
2. It is _____ that our teacher will tell us the answers before the test.
3. Some _____ are more expensive than universities!
4. Among the _____ at our school, there are more girls than boys.
5. I have three pages of math homework tonight, but _____ it's easy.

The Flipped Classroom

The Internet is changing the way teachers work and students learn in classrooms around the world. In a traditional classroom, teachers give lessons. They stand in front of the class and deliver information. They also tell the students what it all means. Then the students do homework or projects to apply the knowledge. That is what is known as a teacher-centered approach.

But some teachers are turning this model around in what is known today as the flipped classroom. Students use the Internet before the lesson to study information before even going to class. They might access an online lecture, or they might be given a research topic to look up. Then when they go to class, they have a chance to find meaning in all that they have heard, read, and seen online. They can talk it over with other students or do a project to apply the knowledge. In this kind of classroom, the teacher becomes a coach, helping the students think about information. It is a student-centered approach that is more like the way people learn and work outside of school environments.

One advantage of the traditional classroom is that teachers can interact with their students. They can therefore determine whether or not the learners understand the information. If students are confused, the teacher can take a moment to explain the information in a different way. Students can ask questions until they are clear on what is being taught. On the other hand, in a flipped classroom using online videos, recorded lectures can be watched again and again. If there is something in the lecture that is still confusing, students can then ask the teacher about it when they get to class. What's more, students can stop the video and think about what they have heard before moving on to the next point.

When students take a more active role in the learning process, they tend to benefit more. Traditional lessons are based on future tests. The students' task is to identify what will be on the test and repeat that information back to the teacher. Students who take an active role in lessons remember more information. They also develop important skills. They understand more deeply what they study and can communicate better with others. They apply knowledge to a variety of situations. In this way, they truly master the material rather than simply learning it.

Word Count 400 words



Comprehension Questions

Circle the right answer.

1. This reading is about
 - a. an online education site.
 - b. a style of teaching.
 - c. a new way to seat students.
2. Which of the following is mentioned as an advantage in a traditional classroom approach?
 - a. Students have more desire to learn.
 - b. Students are required to attend.
 - c. Teachers know if students are confused.
3. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as an advantage in a flipped classroom approach?
 - a. Students don't have to take tests.
 - b. Students can watch the lecture twice.
 - c. Students can develop many skills.
4. What is the main difference between the two approaches?
 - a. The role of the teacher
 - b. The location of classes
 - c. The number of questions on tests
5. What is the author's opinion of the flipped classroom?
 - a. It removes the need for a teacher in the classroom.
 - b. It is too difficult for teachers to do, so most don't try it.
 - c. It makes the learning experience better for students.



Score _____

Extra Practice

Write the right word in each blank to complete the summary.

active

apply

approach

knowledge

online

There is a new 1. _____ to teaching and learning being used in some schools today. As part of this new way of teaching, students watch videos or read information 2. _____ before lessons. Then they come to class to talk about and 3. _____ what they have learned. An advantage to this kind of lesson is that students take a more 4. _____ role in learning. Students seem to remember the 5. _____ they get from this new approach longer.

Technology in the Classroom

These days, students and teachers have more access to technology in schools. Many schools provide computer labs in which students can go online or use programs purchased by the school. But how much technology should be used in the classroom?

The biggest advantage of technology in the classroom today is that information is readily available. The student can simply type a question into a search engine and receive a list of sites with information related to the question. If a teacher wanted to show a short video in a class 20 years ago, the teacher had to first locate the part he or she wanted to show on the video tape. Videos are much easier to show today. These days, a teacher can simply find the video on YouTube. In this way, both teachers and students have access to large amounts of information in a matter of seconds.

Another advantage is the amount of resources that can support students' learning in the classroom. No longer is information only available through a teacher's instruction or classroom books. Now, there are apps, videos, games, and online resources that make lessons more fun and effective. Technology can also help students with different learning styles study the same lesson by different methods.

With all the benefits that technology brings into the classroom, there are some disadvantages. The biggest disadvantage to the use of technology may be lower quality of research and student work. Because there are so many resources available online, it is easier to turn to the internet for research. Often, it is difficult for a student to know and choose which materials to trust. Not only that, but with so much research done through the internet, a student may not even know how to find useful materials in the library.

Another disadvantage is that technology can separate the learner from actual learning. A teacher might intend to use technology in the classroom to make a lesson more interesting, but the technology itself can become the thing students focus on rather than the content of the lesson. It can also limit a student's interaction with his or her classmates as well as limit discussion in the classroom setting.

How much technology should be used in the classroom is up for debate. One thing that is for sure is that technology is here to stay. The best approach may be a balance of both technology and traditional learning methods.



Word Count 400 words

Comprehension Questions

Circle the right answer.

1. This reading is about
 - a. how to use technology in the classroom.
 - b. which kind of classes use technology.
 - c. the benefits and disadvantages of classroom technology.
2. A technology that was used 20 years ago and is still used in classrooms now is
 - a. video materials.
 - b. the internet.
 - c. applications.
3. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as an advantage of technology in the classroom?
 - a. Large amounts of information and resources are available.
 - b. Students can access the school library online.
 - c. Learning is made to suit each student individually.
4. The writer says that a disadvantage to researching through the internet is
 - a. there are too many articles.
 - b. that some authors are not well-known.
 - c. some sources can't be trusted.
5. The writer thinks technology
 - a. should be used with traditional teaching methods.
 - b. should not be used in the classroom.
 - c. should replace traditional teaching methods.



Score _____

Extra Practice

Write the right phrase in each blank.

a matter of seconds learning styles lower quality readily available the best approach

1. Not everyone agrees on _____ to teaching writing skills to students.
2. Online sites can return search results in _____.
3. Some teachers complain that students today do _____ work compared to the past.
4. Teachers need to be aware of the different _____ of students.
5. Technology has made huge amounts of information _____ to anyone with Internet access.

Defining Education

Education is usually defined as the passing or teaching of knowledge and skills to students. But education can come in many forms. When a person typically thinks of education, school may be the first thing that comes to mind. In fact, going to school is one form of education called formal education. It is usually structured and organized teaching. Students typically learn in a classroom with a teacher who is trained to educate students at a certain grade level or in a certain subject matter. Formal education includes both public and private schools. Formal education, if taken all the way to the university level, can lead to a degree and a career in a chosen field.

Vocational education, or an apprenticeship, is another form of education. Apprenticeships started in the 14th and 15th centuries. This is how trades such as making clothes, working with metal, working with wood, and baking were passed on. The master or an expert in a certain trade would hire an apprentice. The apprentice would be a young person, usually 10-15 years old. The apprentice would typically have an interest in the trade or desire to become a master in the trade himself. So, the apprentice would work for the master for little or no money for about seven years to learn the trade. In return, the master would provide the apprentice with a place to sleep and food to eat. Today, apprenticeships may not look like what they did in the 14th and 15th centuries. However, they are still common for those who are interested in work such as repairing cars or building houses.

Informal education usually does not have structure. Therefore, it may not always be an obvious form of education. However, it is an important form of education that can happen almost anywhere. For example, informal education could happen in the home when a child is watching a parent cook dinner. It could include helping with household chores. Informal education could happen outdoors while children are playing, or at a community center while playing with other children or learning how to share. In this way, much of informal education is the knowledge and skills learned through observing and interacting with others.

Think about something you know now that you did not know a year ago. Did you learn this knowledge or skill through formal education, vocational education, or informal education?

Word Count 400 words



Time

Comprehension Questions

Circle the right answer.

1. This reading is about
 - a. different forms of education.
 - b. different types of schools.
 - c. different methods used by teachers.
2. The writer says that formal education is
 - a. structured.
 - b. not very obvious.
 - c. about seven years long.
3. The writer says that those who continue their formal education until university usually
 - a. do not have many skills.
 - b. receive a degree.
 - c. become a master.
4. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a field that typically has a master-apprentice form of education?
 - a. Working with wood
 - b. Car repair
 - c. Engineering
5. The writer says that learning how to play with others is a form of
 - a. formal education.
 - b. vocational education.
 - c. informal education.



Score _____

Extra Practice

Write the right word in each blank to complete the summary.

apprentice

education

household

informal

private

When most people think about 1. _____, they think about what happens in schools. They may think of classrooms in public or 2. _____ schools. Both of these cases are considered formal education. Other ways to learn can be vocational education and 3. _____ education. In the case of vocational lessons, the student is like a(n) 4. _____ who works with a master. Informal lessons happen in homes or places where children learn about 5. _____ chores, life skills, or interacting.



How Teachers Are Viewed

Every school has a teacher, but how teachers are viewed by people is different in every country. What are those views, and how do those views affect a teacher's role?

In China, teachers are compared to doctors. They are highly respected and trusted. This may be related to the strong cultural focus on education in China. The role of a Chinese teacher is to instruct—usually the teacher talks and the students listen. In addition, the Chinese school is seen as a serious place for learning. The teacher is free to punish students who do not follow rules by hitting their hands or involving their parents. Though the teacher may be feared by the students, Chinese students perform well on tests and respect their teachers. In fact, 50% of Chinese parents encourage their children to become teachers.

In the US and UK, teachers are compared to library workers—they provide the means to learn. Their role is to help students. Students are encouraged to be curious; the teacher helps students to discover knowledge while providing a fun and comfortable learning environment. There might be less focus on keeping students in line and following the rules and more focus on development and progress. Some parents or students may see teachers in the US or UK as a student's hero or friend; thus many times, students will look up to a teacher as a role model.

In Finland, teachers are compared to social workers—they work as a team with students to promote personal and emotional growth. In fact, less focus is placed on the amount of education than in other countries. Children in Finland start school at age 7 and are required to attend school for only 9 years. In addition, there is less classroom instruction and plenty of time for breaks and play. Still, students in Finland are also some of the highest performing in the world. Teachers usually teach the same group of students for the first six years of school, so their role is to care for and guide each individual student to success as a parent might do.

Whatever the view and role may be in each country or their individual differences, teachers are generally the heroes behind the scenes of society. They work day in and day out to help students to become the people they want to be and to contribute to society.

Word Count 400 words



Comprehension Questions

Circle the right answer.

1. This reading is about
 - a. how much teachers are paid.
 - b. different views of teachers.
 - c. how to be a teacher.
2. The writer says that
 - a. teachers should be paid more.
 - b. teachers are important to society.
 - c. students should work harder.
3. Which of the following is NOT a profession a teacher is compared to?
 - a. A doctor
 - b. A library worker
 - c. A police officer
4. In China, where teachers are respected, parents
 - a. often punish by hitting the hands.
 - b. trust teachers less when the teacher is younger.
 - c. want their children to become teachers.
5. In Finland, teachers mainly
 - a. care for and guide the students.
 - b. punish the students who don't follow rules.
 - c. give information to the students.



Score _____

Extra Practice

Write the right phrase in each blank.

a highly respected a role model is related to in addition to individual differences

1. Although they have their _____, all of the school's teachers are excellent.
2. My high school English teacher became _____ for me when I was young.
3. The school hired _____ scientist to teach biology and chemistry.
4. The teacher required everyone to do a research project _____ writing three essays.
5. The girl's love for learning new languages _____ all the traveling she does with her family.