

FLUENCY FUEL — STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

Classroom-ready, research-based strategies for phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Phonics & Decoding

Systematic, explicit phonics instruction helps students map sounds to letters and attack unfamiliar words with confidence.

- **Sound-Spelling Mapping**

Use Elkonin boxes or sound-spelling grids so students see how each phoneme connects to a grapheme. Start with simple CVC words and move toward blends, digraphs, and vowel teams.

- **Blending by Analogy**

Teach students to use a known word family (e.g., -at) to decode new words (bat, flat, splat). Post a word ladder anchor chart for quick reference.

- **Multisensory Letter Formation**

Have students trace letters in sand, sky-write, or tap out sounds on their arm while saying the letter name and sound. This strengthens motor memory.

- **Daily Decodable Texts**

Provide short passages or sentences that only include sounds and high-frequency words already taught. This builds success and transfers skills to real reading.

Quick Tip: Spend 10–15 minutes daily on explicit phonics. Brief, distributed practice beats one long weekly lesson.

Fluency

Fluency bridges decoding and comprehension. Fluent readers read accurately, at an appropriate rate, and with expression.

- **Modeling & Echo Reading**

Read a sentence aloud with natural phrasing, then have students echo it back. Repeat with paragraphs as students gain confidence.

- **Repeated Reading with Feedback**

Have students read the same short passage 3–4 times, tracking words correct per minute (WCPM). Graph progress so they see growth.

- **Paired or Choral Reading**

Pair students of similar skill levels to read a passage together, then switch roles. Choral reading lowers anxiety and builds prosody.

- **Phrase-Cued Text**

Reprint passages with line breaks at natural phrase boundaries. This trains readers to chunk words into meaningful units.

Quick Tip: Fluency practice works best with texts students can already decode at 90–95% accuracy. Too-hard text slows everyone down.

Vocabulary

A rich vocabulary lets students understand what they read and express what they think. Direct instruction plus repeated exposure is key.

- **Robust Vocabulary Instruction**

Choose 3–5 high-utility words per read-aloud. Provide student-friendly definitions, examples, non-examples, and ask students to use each word in a new sentence.

- **Morphology Webs**

Teach common prefixes, roots, and suffixes. Create word webs around a root like "struct" (construct, structure, instruct, destructive).

- **Semantic Mapping**

Before reading, brainstorm related words around a central concept (e.g., "habitat"). During reading, add new vocabulary and connections.

- **Word Consciousness**

Celebrate interesting words, play with synonyms and antonyms, and encourage students to notice new words in books, conversation, and media.

Quick Tip: Students need 12–14 meaningful exposures to a new word before it sticks. Spiral back to target words across the week.

Comprehension

Comprehension is the goal of reading. These strategies help students actively construct meaning before, during, and after reading.

- **Predict-Read-Confirm**

Pause before key sections and ask, "What do you think will happen?" After reading, confirm or revise predictions and discuss evidence.

- **Reciprocal Teaching**

Rotate four student-led roles: Predictor, Questioner, Clarifier, and Summarizer. Gradually release responsibility to small groups.

- **Visualizing & Sketching**

Ask students to draw a "movie in their mind" scene or create a quick graphic organizer. Visual representations reveal gaps in understanding.

- **Text-Based Questions**

Ask questions that require evidence from the text. Scaffold from literal (who/what/where) to inferential (why/what if) and evaluative (opinion, author purpose).

Quick Tip: Comprehension improves when students discuss the text. Even a 3-minute turn-and-talk deepens understanding more than silent worksheets alone.

6-STEP IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

1	Assess each student's current skill level in the four target areas.
2	Choose one or two strategies to introduce per week.
3	Model the strategy with a familiar text before independent practice.
4	Provide scaffolded practice with feedback, then gradually release support.
5	Monitor progress weekly and adjust grouping or intensity as needed.
6	Celebrate small wins to build student confidence and motivation.

Differentiation matters: use these strategies as a menu, not a checklist. Match the intensity, pacing, and format to each student's needs.