



## WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

### SPOT: Smooth *Developing Reading Fluency (phrasing)*



### Phrased Reading

An important part of reading fluency is the ability to read in phrases, as opposed to word-by-word reading. Phrases are meaningful units that play an important role in language processing and the ability to comprehend text. Appropriate phrasing is easy to hear in spoken language but more difficult to determine in written language. There is not always punctuation (such as commas) to indicate where the breaks should be. Researchers think that the lack of these phrasing clues may be a stumbling block for many readers.

### Types of Inappropriate Phrasing

There are two types of non-fluent readers who read in inappropriate phrases: those who read word-by-word and those who fragment text. The second type of reader chunks words but does so in seemingly random places, ignoring commas and ending punctuation.

### Ways to Help Readers Improve Phrasing

Teaching readers to chunk or group words into appropriate phrases will help them gain fluency and improve comprehension. Currently, there are three techniques that have been shown to help:

**Repeated Reading.** Repeated reading is simply the practicing of a text until it is smooth, flowing, and simple. Readers orally reread text independently (except for some help with word recognition) until they can read it fluently. Researchers conclude that repeated reading helps readers to discover appropriate phrasing and to group words as they do when speaking. This process is much like how a singer learns a new song – practicing the word groupings until the phrasing and rhythm sound right to the ear. There are several recommendations that help in successfully implementing this method.

1. Keep passages short – 50-300 words.
2. Keep passages at an appropriate level where the reader demonstrates at least 90% accuracy before starting to reread.
3. Set a predetermined level of speed and accuracy for the reader to attain.

If the reader reaches an acceptable rate of speed and accuracy and is reading with appropriate phrasing and expression on the first or second reading, then move to harder passages. If the reader is reading at relatively high rates of speed and accuracy with appropriate phrasing and expression, then set a specific number of rereadings rather than a criterion to meet. The greatest growth in fluency typically occurs between the third and fifth rereadings.



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**Text Segmenting.** Text segmenting involves changing the written text by pre-organizing it for the reader. Because most text is not written in a pre-organized way (as shown below), many students need assistance in learning to phrase information and in transferring this knowledge to new text. By physically dividing text, a model of how one reads becomes more explicit. Researchers have found this process helps readers of all ages (primary-college) improve their chunking skills, which in turn, improves their overall fluency. It also improves their comprehension at the same time!

Text segmenting can be done in several ways:

1. The text can be divided physically by placing each phrase on a line by itself in a column

Example: Starting,  
stopping,  
and repeating  
is no way  
to do  
your reading.  
Pause,  
group words,  
and smooth it out,  
and you'll know  
what your book's  
about.

2. The text can be dividing by placing each phrase on a line by itself and indented to make the division more clear.

Example: Starting,  
stopping,  
and repeating  
is no way  
to do  
your reading.  
Pause,  
group words,  
and smooth it out,  
and you'll know  
what your book's  
about.

3. The text can be written with slashes or blank spaces between phrases. This maintains the standard text format.

Example a): Starting,/ stopping,/ and repeating/ is no way/ to do/ your reading.  
Pause,/ group words/ and smooth it out,/ and you'll know/ what your book's/ about.

Example b): Starting, stopping, and repeating is no way to do your reading.  
Pause, group words, and smooth it out, and you'll know what your book's about.

\*Note: There are many different and appropriate ways of segmenting text.



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**Oral Modeled Reading.** Oral modeled reading involves live or taped fluent reading by a competent reader. This can be in combination with segmented text, as described above. It is one of the most powerful of all techniques in encouraging fluent reading. By providing a rich model of how phrases are grouped, it shows the reader explicitly where to pause, where to change pitch, which words to stress, and which phrases to draw out. It gives the reader a sense of what reading with expression sounds like. Before modeling fluent oral reading for a novice reader, practice reading with appropriate phrasing and smoothness.

#### References:

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