

According to reading expert Timothy Shanahan, [“research suggests that the single most important step in fluency practices is rereading.”](#)

Some students find the “**triple read**” the most strenuous part of the lesson. When students ask, “Why do I have to read this three times?” I explain what fluency is and that researchers agree that repeated readings are the best way to increase and improve it. **Fluency** is the ability to read at an appropriate speed, to group words together in phrases, and to read with an expression that shows understanding of the text. By being the appreciative audience, the tutor motivates the student to do this all-important rereading. (I have imagined myself as a personal trainer in a gym—just being present can make a third push-up happen!)

Unlike ordinary reading material, **decodable stories** offer a safe, stress-free reading experience for struggling readers (and their tutors). Struggling readers feel anxiety about reading aloud (and thus are likely to have had fewer opportunities to do it in the classroom). They fear the many curve balls (unfamiliar spelling patterns) coming their way. When students read decodable stories, they already have had practice with the spelling patterns, endings, prefixes, and suffixes (along with the high-frequency words) in the lessons that preceded the story group.

(Only the “**story words**” are not decodable. Read these words aloud to the student and make clear that these are “extra” words in the story.

Sometimes students will read these words easily because they are common words, such as “new” or “teacher” that they have been exposed to

outside of tutoring. And, you, the tutor, can be ready to jump in and read any story words that the student does not read.)

The students' **first reading of the story** most likely will be slow and choppy. Students will make mistakes with words and will slowly sound out many multisyllable words in chunks. Tutors and students may discuss definitions of any words that the student is unfamiliar with. Feedback on a first reading might be something like: "That was a really good first reading; you sounded out some long words."

The **second and third readings** will sound different. Those readings will be faster and smoother; the phrasing will sound more natural, as students read groups of words rather than individual words; and students will read with expression, demonstrating an understanding of the meaning of what they are reading. A **third reading** might not be perfect, but it will be much better than the first reading. Students can appreciate how different those readings sound and feel. Before the third reading, a tutor might say something like, "You are doing such a good job with this passage; now for your third read, you can really 'perform' it." Students who like acting may enjoy imagining that they are reading the passage to a class of younger students.

Stamina in reading describes how much reading a student can do or tolerate. Often students will let you know that a reading seems "too long." Reading aloud, over a period of weeks and months, increases students' stamina for reading. It is so fun to see students become aware of how much more reading they can do (and tolerate) than just a month or two

ago. As with running, the more practice they do, the more stamina they have.

Tutors can suggest that students take some deep breaths and do a stretch between readings. With most students, I have suggested that we “celebrate” the “triple read” by playing a quick game (like Crazy 8’s or Spot It).