

## Comprehension-Based Silent Reading Efficiency Norm Rates (words per minute)

The table displays comprehension-based word-per-minute silent reading rates for students across grade levels and adult reading proficiency ranges. The original data were collected as part of a large national silent reading norm study that involved 2,203 students in grades 2-12 across 16 states, representing all regions of the United States. Adult reading proficiency levels were matched referring to NRS and CCR crosswalks.

Grades	TABE SS	CASAS SS	Reading Rate Quartiles (words per minute)			
			<25 <sup>th</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup> to 50 <sup>th</sup>	50 <sup>th</sup> to 75 <sup>th</sup>	≥75 <sup>th</sup> **
2	<472	<211	< 87	87 - 106	107 - 136	≥ 136
3	442-471	204-210	< 99	99 - 123	124 - 154	≥ 155
4	472-500	211-216	< 114	114 - 141	142 - 170	≥ 171
5	501-518	217-222	< 123	123 - 149	150 - 179	≥ 179
6	519-535	223-227	< 128	128 - 157	158 - 191	≥ 191
7	536-549	228-230	< 132	133 - 158	159 - 191	≥ 191
8	550-562	231-234	< 134	134 - 158	159 - 193	≥ 193
9	563-575	235-238	< 141	141- 168	169 - 202	≥ 202
10	576-616	239-248	< 149	149 - 172	173 - 208	≥ 208
11	617-709	249-253	< 150	150 - 173	174 - 217	≥ 217
12	710-800	≥254	< 151	151 - 175	176 - 225	≥ 225

Adapted from Data Source: Spichtig, A. N., Hiebert, E. H., Vorstius, C., Pascoe, J. P., Pearson, P. D., & Radach, R. (2016). The Decline of Comprehension-Based Silent Reading Efficiency in the United States: A Comparison of Current Data with Performance in 1960. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 51(2), 239–259.

**Very inefficient reading behavior** - silent reading rate is well below typical conversational speaking rate in English\*; very little reading efficiency improvement beyond the elementary school years.  
--Students need to be checked for visual skill deficiency.

**Inefficient reading** - silent reading rate is well below conversational speaking rate in lower grades and never exceeds speaking rate in upper grades; little improvement beyond the elementary school years.  
--Students need to be checked for visual skill deficiency.

**Approaching efficient reading** - Silent reading rates in the upper section of this quartile exceed conversational speaking rate in upper grades; modest reading efficiency improvement beyond the elementary school years.  
--Students who read <175wpm should be checked for vocabulary knowledge and visual skill deficiency.

**Efficient reading** - Silent reading rates are within conversational speaking range by grade 3 and above speaking rate by grade 5; significant reading efficiency improvement well beyond elementary school years.  
--Students who are getting tired from reading should be checked for visual skill deficiency.

\* Typical conversational speaking rate in English (150–170 wpm); Yuan, J., Liberman, M., & Cieri, C. (2006). Towards an integrated understanding of speaking rate in conversation. In *Proceedings of the ninth International Conference on Spoken Language Processing (INTERSPEECH 2006)* (pp. 541–544).

\*\* Only students who are able to take in an entire word per fixation (eye stop) are able to read at 250wpm and beyond. Readers who can read at 300+wpm are no longer internally sub-vocalizing; reading is efficient and can typically be done for extended periods of time.

# Instructional Recommendations for Silent Reading Efficiency Development

Refer to the reading rate for instructional areas in need of attention and recommended instruction.

Reading Rate	Performance Characteristics	Visual Skill Building	Foundational Skill Building	Reading Efficiency Training & Text Recommendation
<125	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students have most likely not yet mastered foundational skills.</li> <li>Students need to develop/strengthen a firm concept of words.</li> <li>Students may be struggling with the physical process of reading.</li> <li>Students have insufficient sight-word recognition.</li> <li>Students may have insufficiently developed visual skills.</li> <li>Students tire easily and typically avoid reading.</li> <li>Older students typically call reading boring.</li> </ul>	<p>Students will benefit from visual skill development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual attention (e.g., recognizing pattern, similarities, differences)</li> <li>Visual memory (e.g., brief flashes of shapes, numbers, letters, words)</li> <li>Tracking (e.g., follow a moving target: left, right, up, down...)</li> <li>Navigation (e.g., navigate along a path, maze, line of letters, numbers, text)</li> <li>Accommodation (e.g., focus on targets at different distances)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and apply phonics and decoding strategies through word study.</li> <li>Develop/strengthen firm concept of words: use song lyrics, simple rhymes, dictation</li> <li>Develop instant word recognition of simple, high frequency words: flash words (e.g., flash cards).</li> <li>Develop word lists.</li> <li>Daily practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text length: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rate: &lt;80wpm: ~300-400 words</li> <li>Rate: 80-100wpm: 400-800 words</li> <li>Rate: 100-125wpm: 800-1400 words</li> </ul> </li> <li>Use simple and explicit texts with lots of repetition of high frequency words that students need to know and that are meaningful across curricula Lexile® range: &lt;530L</li> <li>Comprehension tasks: Focus on core skills such as Close Reading, Main Idea and Themes, Interaction of Ideas</li> <li>Daily practice</li> </ul>
125-150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading is not dynamic yet. Students have not yet developed efficient reading habits or have developed bad habits.</li> <li>Students may be stuck in the transitional stage of literacy development (decoding words -&gt; taking in words as units).</li> <li>Students may have limited sight-word vocabulary.</li> </ul>	<p>Students will benefit from exercises that engage both hemispheres of the brain (e.g., Brain Gym®)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to develop instant word recognition of high frequency words: flash words (e.g., flash cards).</li> <li>Develop word lists (word families; morphological derivations).</li> <li>Daily practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text length: 1400-1700 words</li> <li>Use texts with a high degree of repetition of high frequency vocabulary that is useful across curricula Lexile® range: 420L to 650L</li> <li>Comprehension tasks: Focus on core skills such as Close Reading, Main Idea and Themes, Interaction of Ideas</li> <li>Daily practice</li> </ul>
150-175	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The physical process of reading is more dynamic now.</li> <li>Students can begin to focus on information processing rather than laboriously navigating text.</li> <li>Reading is becoming more enjoyable and fluid (matches conversational speaking rate).</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text length: 1700-2500 words</li> <li>Use texts with a high degree of repetition of meaningful and relevant vocabulary and concepts. Lexile® range: 520L to 1010L</li> <li>Comprehension tasks: Focus on core skills first! Secondary focus: Craft &amp; Structure and Integration of Knowledge</li> <li>Daily practice</li> </ul>
175-200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students' silent reading rates begin to exceed typical conversational speaking rates.</li> <li>Getting information from print is becoming faster (and more independent) than asking someone.</li> <li>Reading is more likely to become a tool of choice for learning.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to develop instant word recognition of key vocabulary.</li> <li>Develop/maintain word lists (word families; morphological derivations).</li> <li>Practice: 1-5 days per week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text length: 2500-3000 words</li> <li>Use texts with a high degree of repetition of meaningful and relevant vocabulary and concepts. Lexile® range: &gt;830L to 1050L</li> <li>Comprehension tasks: Focus on core skills first! Craft &amp; Structure and Integration of Knowledge are secondary,</li> <li>Practice: 3-4 days per week</li> </ul>
200-250	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading is efficient and feels comfortable.</li> <li>Students are typically independently motivated to read; reading is an efficient tool for learning.</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text length: 3000+ words</li> <li>Use texts with a high degree of meaningful and relevant vocabulary and concepts. Lexile® range: &gt;1000L</li> </ul>
250-300	Subvocalization threshold is typically met between 250-280wpm.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus of comprehension tasks shifts toward integration of knowledge and Ideas such as reasoning and rhetoric, comparative reading</li> <li>Practice: 1-3 days per week</li> </ul>
300+	Very efficient and productive readers who can read easily for extended periods of time.			