

Student's Name: _____ Sex: ___ Age: ___ Grade: ___ Date: _____

Test Administrator: _____ Test Location: _____

Reading Competency Test

The National Right to Read Foundation

Part 1: Phonics Knowledge and Decoding Ability

Print two copies of Part 1. Have the student read aloud from his copy. As you listen, make a checkmark on your copy each time the student 1) Skips a word, 2) Substitutes a different word, even though it may have similar meaning, 3) Inserts a non-related word, or 4) Mispronounces a word (if the student corrects the mispronunciation, remove the check). Stop if the student receives four or more checks in any one group. To continue would only add to the student's sense of frustration.

Group A

The big red hen is mad.
Did Bob get on the bus?
Ben can fix his bad bat.
Hit the fat bug on the bed.
Don let the cat sit on his lap.

checkmarks in group A:

Group B

Step up when I yell, "Lift the flag."
Bang went the black drum!
Stan shot the last duck..
Blot up the mess on the glass top desk.
Help Fred lift the big clock.

checkmarks in Group B:

Group C

Steve got a base hit late in the game.
Take the pan of white rice off the stove.
Kate will bake a fine cake and win a dime.
Dave rode his bike in the race.
Mike chose the cage of mice for his prize.

checkmarks in Group C:

Group D

In a dream Gail met a sheep on the beach.
Take a seat on the boat by the sail.
Wait a week to paint the chain.
His team made roast beef to eat.
The rain on his feet made Dean groan.

checkmarks in Group D:

Group E

Her third bird was born in the barn.
Take more care of your hair.
Four car horns were heard by the clerk.
Wear your shirt in the street or at work.
The sports stars will park their cars by the church.

checkmarks in Group E:

Group F

I found a foul mouse in our room.
If I boil the sour soup it will spoil.
A loud howl was heard on the lawn.
The clown shook the round hoop.
Mack bought his smooth boots in town.

checkmarks in Group F:

Group G

He saw Sue play with the toy bee.
You may buy the two new saws.
Can she ski on the wide blue sea?
The cow and the crow play by the tree.
The blue fly lays its eggs in the dry hay.

checkmarks in Group G:

Group H

It was dumb to leave his glove in the field.
The calf would like some salt this cold night.
A ghost said, "Dare to guess if I am dead."
Phone for some bread and fruit for the child.
Find the part of the sword that is rough to touch.
:

checkmarks in Group H:

Part 2: Informal Grade Level Assessment

Print two copies of Part 2. Have the student read aloud from his copy. As you listen, make a checkmark on your copy each time the student 1) Skips a word, 2) Substitutes a different word, even though it may have similar meaning, 3) Inserts a non-related word, or 4) Mispronounces a word (if the student corrects the mispronunciation, remove the check). Stop if the student receives five or more checks in any one group. To continue would only add to the student's sense of frustration.

Group 1 – First-Grade

“What is that?” said Lucy, as she came out on the steps. “Oh, it is a little boat! What a pretty one it is!”
“I will give it to you when it is finished,” said John, kindly. “Would you like to have it?”
“Yes, very much, thank you, John. Has grandma seen it?”

checkmarks in Group 1:

Group 2 – Second-Grade

Herbert worked away until he had made the beam and the post. Then he made a hole in the middle of the block, and put the post in. Next, he put the beam into a little groove at the top of the post, so that it would balance nicely.

checkmarks in Group 2:

Group 3 – Third-Grade

“Don’t you hate splitting wood?” asked Charlie, as he sat down on a log to hinder Rob for a while.
“No, I rather like it. When I get hold of a tough old fellow, I say, ‘See here, now, you think you’re the stronger, and are going to beat me.’”

checkmarks in Group 3:

Group 4 – Fourth-Grade

In several parts of the world there are to be found large herds of wild horses. In South America the immense plains are inhabited by them, and it is said that ten thousand are sometimes found in a single herd. These herds are always preceded by a leader, who directs their motions.

checkmarks in Group 4:

Group 5 – Fifth-Grade

The bear, a ten-foot mass in tolerable proportion, seemed to be regularly beset by a pack of hungry little swells. First, one would take him on the haunch, then whip back into the sea over his tail and between his legs. Presently a bolder swell would rise and pitch into his back.

checkmarks in Group 5:

Group 6 – Sixth-Grade

It is a spacious and timbered room, with one large bull's eye window—an overgrown lens. The thing is sort of a Cyclops. There are ropes, and chains, and a windlass. There is a bell by which the engineer of the first engine can signal the plowman, and a cord whereby the plowman can talk back.

checkmarks in Group 6:

The First Step Towards Literacy

You have taken the first step towards literacy by deciding to take the *Reading Competency Test*. Everyone should be able to read what they can talk about and understand. The Reading Competency Test is a simple, reliable, valid test developed by Dr. Patrick Groff for *The National Right to Read Foundation*. It will help you determine if your child or someone you love is missing out on the most important part of schooling, learning to read.

The National Right to Read Foundation was established in 1993 to encourage schools to return to the direct teaching of intensive, systematic phonics in every first-grade classroom in America. Scores of reading research studies have been done over the past seventy-five years that prove phonics is an essential first step in learning to read. We know that without intensive phonics instruction, many children will remain handicapped readers for life.

For most of America's history, everyone who went to school learned to read. But about sixty years ago, many teachers, professors of education and publishing companies rejected common sense and many years of successful teaching practice and adopted the "look and say" method of teaching reading, now called "whole language." The result has been a disaster for millions of children, who are now labeled dyslexic, or learning disabled, but whose only problem is that they haven't been taught to read.

One way *The National Right to Read Foundation* is helping expose the terrible tragedy of illiteracy is to give wide exposure to this *Reading Competency Test*. The only way we can determine the true literacy rate in America is with a reliable, valid test of reading ability. Once you know the truth then steps can be taken to fix the problem.

If you or your loved ones have difficulty passing this test, then you need to take remedial action immediately. An intensive, systematic phonics program you can use at home may be just the help you need. Remember, teaching someone to read can be one of the most rewarding experiences you can ever have. It is our hope that this simple *Reading Competency Test* will awaken the American people, so that together we can restore reading practices to our schools that will make America once again, the most literate nation on earth.

Background for Parents and Teachers

by Dr. Patrick Groff

Dr. Patrick Groff, Professor of Education Emeritus, San Diego State University, has published over 300 books, essays, and journal articles and is a nationally known expert in the field of reading.

The National Right to Read Foundation is offering an easy-to-administer test of reading abilities that can be given to students or adults. *The Reading Competency Test* is written so that anyone can administer it and gain independent information about the reading abilities of individuals who read poorly.

The *Reading Competency Test* is modeled after what is known as the “Informal Reading Inventory” (IRI). The IRI originated in the 1940’s as a quick and relatively simple way for classroom teachers to determine how well their students were reading grade-level written materials. Its use has been proved satisfactory since the IRI has been found to be both a reliable and a valid means to discern how well students can read materials at different grade-levels of difficulty.

Its reliability has been demonstrated repeatedly. Anyone who carefully follows the uncomplicated directions when scoring it will obtain the same scores for a student as does any other administrator of the test. The same is true for *the Reading Competency Test*.

The IRI also is a valid test. The IRI presents samples of reading text at different grade levels of difficulty to determine whether a student is reading at an (1) independent, (2) instructional, or (3) frustration level. *The Reading Competency Test* follows these same procedures.

These testing procedures have been validated by comparing them with IRI scores gained in earlier days and with scores of widely-used standardized reading tests. There have been significant positive correlations obtained between the two sets of scores. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the test procedures used by the IRI, and by *the Reading Competency Test*, are valid ones.

The Reading Competency Test also is a valid test of how well students or adults apply phonics information to the recognition of written words. In this regard, the *Test* presents specially-written groups of sentences for students or adults to read which contain carefully selected words. These special words were selected because they can be decoded successfully by the application of certain, discrete phonics rules. It was then determined which phonics rules the nation’s experts in phonics teaching indicate that students learning to read must learn. The ability to apply all these recommended phonics rules is tested in the *Test*. It thus is a valid examination of an individual’s ability to apply crucial phonics information to read words and sentences. The *Test* is a unique diagnostic tool to determine what phonics skills students and adults still need to learn.

The *Test* is not intended to displace the standardized reading tests. Rather it is designed to provide special information about reading skills that usually are not reported to parents or the public by the schools. The information about reading abilities gained from the *Test* will add to the information parents presently can gain from the schools. The *Test* is particularly useful for examining the reading skills of adults who read poorly. Many adults have no recent records of their general reading skills, or how well they can read grade-level designated materials, or apply phonics information.

Parents who administer the *Reading Competency Test* may find that report-card grades are higher than the reading scores on the *Test*. There are at least three possible reasons for this discrepancy.

First, a report card grade represents the teacher's personal, subjective opinion of a child's reading performance. Unfortunately, there is a tendency among today's teachers to give inflated grades in reading.

Second, the teacher who gives an inflated grade in reading may have based this decision in part on the child's previous score on a standardized reading test. Regrettably, many publishers adjust the grade-level norms on their tests to obtain higher average student scores. In many cases today, no large body of students given a certain standardized test will score below the average. In other words, such a standardized test no longer is a legitimate indicator of the relative abilities of children to read well.

Third, the *U.S. Department of Education* recently reported that it has found that 48 percent of American adults are "functionally illiterate." Many adults, who read poorly, doubtless had been given good marks for reading on their report cards. It certainly is not true that 48 percent of students receive Ds or Fs in reading on their report cards. It seems clear, then, that schools have given inflated grades in reading for years.

Considering these facts, it is the position of *The National Right to Read Foundation* that the *Reading Competency Test* will more accurately reveal true reading abilities than do some report card grades, or the scores of many modern standardized reading tests.

How to Give the Test

Part 1 of the test consists of eight groups of sentences (A-H) that contain phonetically regular one-syllable words. It will help you determine how well the student knows phonics.

Part 2 consists of six paragraphs taken from the middle part of school readers, grades 1-6 that were in wide use 100 years ago—a time when children were taught to read with intensive, systematic instruction in phonics. Each paragraph represents material that anyone who has been properly taught should be able to read and comprehend within their grade level. Keep in mind that grade-level 6 is equivalent to high-school level reading today.

Print two copies of the *Reading Competency Test*. Have the student read aloud in his copy from the sentences and paragraphs. As you listen, make a check mark in your copy each time the student 1) Skips a word, 2) Substitutes a different word, even though it may have similar meaning, 3) Inserts a non-related word, or 4) Mispronounces a word (if the student corrects the mispronunciation, remove the check). Stop if the student receives four or more checks in any one group in Part 1, or five or more checks in any one paragraph in Part 2. To continue would only add to the student's sense of frustration.

How to Interpret the Results

Analyze each group of sentences in Part 1 and Part 2 separately:

Use the following guidelines for Part 1: Independent = 1 check mark; Instructional = 2 to 3; Frustration = 4 or more.

Use the following guidelines for Part 2: Independent = 1 check mark; Instructional = 2 to 4; Frustration = 5 or more.

If the student has completed the second grade and cannot read all the sentences in Part 1 with one check or less in each group, the student is in need of remedial phonics instruction. Likewise if the student cannot read at an independent level at his or her current grade level, the student is in need of remedial phonics instruction. (Each Group in Part 2 represents a grade level.)

Phonics is the Answer

If the student does not score well on the *Reading Competency Test*, it does not mean that he or she is dyslexic, or has a learning disability, or that he or she is of inferior intelligence. It does mean that he or she has not been taught to read with intensive, systematic phonics.

Note from Donald Potter: This edition was prepared in Word and pdf format for teachers using the *Reading Competency Test* (RCT) by Dr. Patrick Groff. For effective commercial phonics programs, visit *The National Right to Read Foundation* web site: www.nrrf.org. For a free copy of *The Miller Word Identification Assessment* which detects whole-word dyslexia and for free phonics-first teaching programs, visit the Education Page of my web site: www.donpotter.net.

The Essence of Phonics

by Dr. Patrick Groff
NRRF Board Member & Senior Advisor

Dr. Patrick Groff, Professor of Education Emeritus San Diego State University, has published over 325 books, monographs, and journal articles and is a nationally known expert in the field of reading instruction.

For parents who may not understand what phonics information is, this may give them confidence they can teach it. The essence of what you need to know to teach phonics information can be expressed "on the back of an envelope":

1. Letters of the alphabet represent the sounds of speech.
2. The "short" vowel sounds are:
/ă / as in at; /ĕ/ in elf; /ĭ/ in it; /ŏ / in odd; / ŭ/ in up
3. Attaching short vowels to consonant sounds makes
/ab-eb-ib-ob-ub/, or /ba-be-bi-bo-bu/, or
/bat-bet-bit-bot-but/, or /brag-bled-drip-stop-drum/, or
/fast-rest-fist-cost-must/, or /grand-blend-brisk-frost-crust/
4. The "long" vowel sounds are:
/ā/ as in game; /ē/ in Pete; /ī/ in pine; /ō/ in home; /ū/ in cute
5. The long vowels also are spelled with two *joined* letters:
fail, play; seen, leaf; die; boat
6. The diphthongs are /oi/ as in *oil* or *boy*, and /ou/ as in *howl* or *out*.
Two other important vowel sounds are /oo/ in *foot*, and /ōō/ in *boot*.
7. Long vowels, diphthongs, and /oo/ and /ōō/ attached to consonant sounds make up many words (the same way short vowels do).
8. Some consonant sounds are spelled with joined letters:
/ch/ as in *chant*; /kw/ in *quack*; /sh/ in *shop*; /th/ in *this*
9. Some speech sounds in words are not spelled according to the above phonics rules: *angel; vary, care, hair; be; myth, prince, fence; find, night, by; arm, salt, cough; union; both, know; truth, who, rude, new; put*.
Some words have "silent" letters:
comb, write, bubble, middle, cuff, full, common, connect, poppy, tarry, miss, butter, buzz.
10. All words are sounded-out *left-to-right* when phonics information is applied to them.