DP 101

Diagnostic Reading Assessment

An Informal Reading Inventory Used to Diagnose, Place, and Post-Test Student Reading Abilities

EXAMINER'S MANUAL

WHAT IS AN INFORMAL READING INVENTORY?

The Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) is an informal diagnostic reading test, usually based on materials that the pupil will be reading in class, to determine at what level instruction should begin. It is an informal test, based on criteria developed by Dr. Emmett Betts at Temple University in the 1940's, and revised and adapted by thousands of teachers since then. As an informal test, <u>it must be supplemented by teacher judgment.</u> Four levels of reading can be determined by skillful use of the IRI. These levels are:

Independent Level. This is the level at which the pupil requires no formal or regular assistance from the teacher. The pupil's oral reading and comprehension skills at this level are excellent. For purposes of this IRI, we have used the following criteria for the reading selections: Word Recognition: 97%- 100% accuracy; Comprehension: 90% - 100% accuracy. These criteria are listed at the end of each reading selection. When working with the *Contained Reading Comprehension and Fluency Development Series,* it is desirable to begin instruction at the pupil's Independent Level.

Instructional Level. This is the level for small group instruction or individual work within the regular classroom. The teacher's assistance is required at this level. Direct and systematic instruction is needed if the pupil is to make continuous progress. For purposes of this IRI, we have used the following criteria for the reading selections: Word Recognition: 92% - 96% accuracy; Comprehension: 70% 85% accuracy.

Frustration Level. Reading material at this level is much too difficult for the pupil. The pupil is frustrated by either word recognition or comprehension, or both. Where possible, material at this level should be avoided. For purposes of this IRI, we have used the following criteria for the reading selections: Word Recognition: below 92% accuracy; Comprehension: below 70% accuracy.

Hearing Capacity Level. This is the level that the pupil should be able to comprehend provided there are no word recognition problems. It is also a rough indication of intellectual capacity, since there is a positive relationship between hearing comprehension and general intelligence. To determine this level, the teacher reads aloud passages to the pupil until the latter's comprehension score falls below 70%. For example, let us say that a fifth grader frustrates (i.e., Word Recognition Score falls below 92%) when reading a third grade selection. The teacher will then read aloud the fourth grade selection to the child. If the pupil scores 70% or above, the teacher continues with the fifth grade selection, and so on until the pupil fails to reach the 70% comprehension score. Thus, this same fifth grader who frustrated at the third grade level, but was able to understand material when read aloud to him or her through sixth grade difficulty, has the potential, theoretically, to do work at a sixth grade level.

PURPOSES OF THE INFORMAL READING INVENTORY

1. To determine the grade level at which the pupil will begin using the Reading Comprehension Workbooks, Levels 1-10.
2. To provide the teacher with diagnostic information, obtained in a one-to-one testing situation, about the pupil's word recognition skills, comprehension strategies, rates of comprehension, and general reading behavior.
3. To observe the pupil's behavior during the reading act particularly for signs of frustration, e, g., not wanting to continue reading, anger, unusual complaints or marked distaste for testing situation. These behavioral signs are just as significant, if not more so, than numerical scores.
4. To determine four levels of reading: Independent, Instructional, Frustration, and Hearing Capacity.
5. To supplement standardized test scores with informal test data to obtain a more realistic view of the pupil's true reading performance.

HOW TO USE THE INFORMAL READING INVENTORY
Use of the Word Lists*

1.   Use the word lists as a starting point. If you have no information about the pupil, begin with the list that is at least two grade levels below the pupil's present grade placement. For example, if a pupil is in Grade 5, begin with Word List, Level C (third grade difficulty). Your main purpose is to determine the pupil's Independent Level (i.e., a score of 90% or higher on a word list). Once you have determined the Independent Level on the basis of the word lists, that is the starting level for the reading selections. The pupil's performance on these isolated word lists is not a measure of reading ability, but merely an indication of where to begin testing with the reading selections.

2.   In using the word lists, ask the pupil to pronounce each of the twenty words aloud, allowing one to three seconds for each word. Scoring five points for each correct pronunciation, check with the criteria at the bottom of each list. Remember, your objective is to locate the pupil's Independent Level. To illustrate: You are testing a sixth grade student. You begin with Level D (fourth grade difficulty). The pupil makes five errors which is equal to 75% accuracy, or Instructional Level. You then try Word List, Level C (third grade difficulty). The pupil makes two errors which is equal to 90% accuracy, or Independent Level. This is the level (i.e., Level C or third grade) at which the pupil begins the reading selections.

Use of the Reading Selections*

1.   For the reading selections, there is both a Word Recognition Score and a Comprehension Score. The Word Recognition Score is based on the pupil's oral reading performance in context. The Comprehension Score is the average of the comprehension score following oral reading and the comprehension score following silent reading.

2.   Continue the testing with Reading Selection, Level C. Note the number of oral reading errors made, and check with the criteria following the oral reading selection. Ask the comprehension questions (the pupil is to respond without looking at the text) and proceed to the silent reading selection. Following the silent reading, ask the questions and average the comprehension scores.

3.   To illustrate: At Level C (third grade difficulty), the pupil made four oral reading errors, which was equivalent to Independent Level. The comprehension score following oral reading was 90%; the comprehension score following silent reading was 100%. The averaged Comprehension Score equaled 95%, or Independent Level. Proceed to the fourth grade reading selections (Level D). Assume that both the Word Recognition Score and the Comprehension Score were at the Independent Level. Proceed to the fifth grade reading selections (Level E). At this level, the Word Recognition Score was Instructional Level while the Comprehension Score was at Independent Level. This means that the true Independent Level on the IRI (both the Word Recognition Score and the Comprehension Score were at the Independent Level) was Level D, or fourth grade. Thus, the starting point for the *Contained Reading Comprehension and Fluency Development Series* is Level D, or fourth grade difficulty.

4.   When you begin the reading selections, and the pupil scores Instructional Level on either Word Recognition or Comprehension, or both, proceed to an easier level until Independent Level is reached. To be considered Independent Level, scores on both Word Recognition and Comprehension must be at the Independent Level.

5.   As a time-saver, the teacher might omit the silent reading selections. However, as is the case with shortcuts, certain diagnostic information may be lost. For example, the opportunity to compare oral reading rate with silent reading rate is lost as is the comparison between the comprehension scores following oral reading and silent reading.

*See page 4 for scoring criteria.

6. It is recommended that the teacher time both the oral reading and the silent reading selections. This is particularly important from the third grade level on, where the great majority of pupils begin to show a significant difference between silent and oral reading rates. For example, a fourth grader, whose rate is similar for both oral and silent reading selections, is most likely a word-by-word reader with serious word recognition problems.

    A rate chart is provided at the end of each selection in the Examiner's Record Booklet. Most pupils' rates will be covered by this chart. If not, the teacher should be able to determine the rate by using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Words in Selection X 60}}{\text{Time in Seconds}}$$

7. A rate chart comparing oral and silent reading rates for Grades 1-12 is provided at the end of this Manual (p.7).

    When scoring a pupil's response to the comprehension questions, the pupil should be given the benefit of the doubt. At times, the teacher may give the pupil one-half credit (i.e., five points) when the pupil gives one of two expected responses, or supplies an answer that is not fully correct but deserves some credit. Though exact or reasonable answers are provided with each reading selection, a pupil's response may differ slightly and still be credible enough to deserve full credit. Once again, this is a matter for teacher judgment.

    For the questions following both the oral and silent reading selections, the authors have designated the types of questions with the following symbols:

    F = Factual

    I = Inference

    V = Vocabulary

    MI = Main Idea

8. Prior to both oral reading and silent reading selections, the teacher should give the following, or similar, directions:

    > I would like you to read this story (or these paragraphs) aloud (or to yourself). Read the story carefully, because when you are finished, I am going to ask you some questions about it.

    It is important that the pupil realize that questions will be asked following the reading. In this way, the pupil should make some effort to comprehend what she or he reads aloud or silently.

9. In determining the Independent Level, it is necessary to find the Instructional Level. The level just preceding the instructional Level will be the Independent Level. In determining the Instructional Level, it is necessary to find the Frustration Level. The level just preceding the Frustration Level is the Instructional Level.

10. The rationale on which this test is based will largely preclude a pupil from working at the Frustration Level. Thus, in the great majority of cases, a pupil spending an almost interminable length of time silently reading a passage should rarely occur.

11. A Summary Sheet should be completed for each pupil tested. This sheet includes spaces for all parts of the inventory. It is recommended that the Summary Sheet be considered an important part of the pupil's reading record.

12. A final note: please remember that this reading inventory is an informal reading test. It is not a standardized test. Nor are your pupils "standardized." An IRI must be supplemented with teacher judgment. Thus, if a teacher feels that it is worthwhile to begin instruction with the Contained Reader at a pupil's Instructional Level (based on this IRI), the teacher should do so. However, the rationale for beginning at the Independent Level is to assure success at the starting point.

Scoring Criteria: Example of IRI Testing Procedure to Be Used
with a Sixth Grade Pupil

Word Lists

Level D	5 errors (75%)	Instructional Level
Level C	2 errors (90%)	Independent Level

Begin reading selections at Level C on basis of achievement on above word lists.

Reading Selections

Level C	Word Recognition (oral reading in context)	4 errors	Independent Level
	Comprehension (following oral reading)	90%	Independent Level
	Comprehension (following silent reading)	100 %	Independent Level
		$2\sqrt{190}$ 95%	Independent Level
Level D	Word Recognition (oral reading in context)	5 errors	Independent Level
	Comprehension (following oral reading)	100%	Independent Level
	Comprehension (following silent reading)	90%	Independent Level
		$2\sqrt{190}$ 95%	Independent Level
Level E	Word Recognition (oral reading in context)	12 errors	Instructional Level
	Comprehension (following oral reading)	80%	Instructional Level
	Comprehension (following silent reading)	100%	Independent Level
		$2\sqrt{180}$ 90%	Independent Level

Summary. The Independent Level (i.e., that level at which both the Word Recognition Score and the Comprehension Score meet Independent Level criteria) on the basis of the above illustration is Level D at fourth grade level. Though the pupil's Comprehension Score at Level E was Independent Level, the Word Recognition Score at this level was Instructional Level. Thus, the pupil should begin work with Contained Reader at the fourth grade level, Level D.

Suggested Code for Marking Errors on the Oral Reading Selections

TYPE OF ERROR	SYMBOL TO BE USED	
Substitution	——————	underline the word or word part and write in the substituted word or word part
Mispronunciation	═══════	Double line under word or word part mispronounced
Omission	◯	circle omitted word (Note: if the entire line is omitted, score as one error)
Repetition	∿∿∿	wavy line under word or words omitted
Insertion	^	write inserted word
Word pronounced by examiner	✔	make a check above the word
Reversal (letters or words)	⤸	use double-headed arrow connecting the words of letters reversed
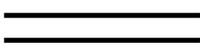
Proficiency in recording errors comes with practice. At first it may be best for the teacher to underline or check each type of error. When the pupil completes the comprehension portion of the graded reading selection, the teacher can go back and mark the specific errors before going on to the next selection.

As in the use of any informal or standardized test, it is important that the teacher be familiar with the content of the test. A careful reading (and re-reading) of the word lists and reading selections is recommended.

Scoring for Oral Reading Selections

(Note: These criteria also appear in the Examiner's Record Booklet with each reading selection.)

	Word Recognition	Average Comprehension Scores
Independent Level:	97% - 100% accuracy	90% - 100%
Instructional Level:	92% - 96% accuracy	70% - 85%
Frustration Level	below 92% accuracy	below 70%
Hearing Capacity Level:		70% and above
(teacher reads selections aloud to pupil)		

Level A (First Grade)

Word Recognition Errors   Comprehension Errors
     Independent   0-4   0-1
     Instructional   5-11   2-3
     Frustration   12 or more   4 or more

Level B (Second Grade)

Word Recognition Errors   Comprehension Errors
     Independent   0-4   0-1
     Instructional   5-11   2-3
     Frustration   12 or more   4 or more

Level C (Third Grade)

Word Recognition Errors   Comprehension Errors
     Independent   0-5   0-1
     Instructional   6-13   2-3
     Frustration   14 or more   4 or more

Level D (Fourth Grade)

Word Recognition Errors   Comprehension Errors
     Independent   0-5   0-1
     Instructional   6-13   2-3
     Frustration   14 or more   4 or more

Level E (Fifth Grade)

Word Recognition Errors   Comprehension Errors
     Independent   0-6   0-1
     Instructional   7-15   2-3
     Frustration   16 or more   4 or more

Level F (Sixth Grade)

Word Recognition Errors   Comprehension Errors
     Independent   0-8   0-1
     Instructional   9-21   2-3
     Frustration   22 or more   4 or more

Level G (Seventh Grade)

Word Recognition Errors   Comprehension Errors
     Independent   0-8   0-1
     Instructional   9-22   2-3
     Frustration   23 or more   4 or more

Level H (Eighth Grade)

Word Recognition Errors		Comprehension Errors
Independent	0-9	0-1
Instructional	10-23	2-3
Frustration	24 or more	4 or more

Level I (Ninth Grade)

Word Recognition Errors		Comprehension Errors
Independent	0-9	0-1
Instructional	10-23	2-3
Frustration	24 or more	4 or more

Level J (Tenth Grade)

Word Recognition Errors		Comprehension Errors
Independent	0-8	0-1
Instructional	9-23	2-3
Frustration	24 or more	4 or more

REPRESENTATIVE RATE CHART

(Rate in Words per Minute: Oral and Silent)

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Oral Reading	50	85	110	120	130	145	155	160	170	175	175	180
Silent Reading	50	85	120	140	155	180	200	220	240	260	270	280-300

Note: Rate charts should be used only as a guide. Since the term, "rate" refers to "rate of comprehension" or "speed of comprehension," it should be interpreted with great caution. Among the factors that significantly affect rate are: interest, prior knowledge, motivation, difficulty of the reading selection, purpose, teaching methods, and pupils' perceptions of the importance of rate.