

Introduction to the Conventions for Taking a Running Record of Text Reading

Sensitive Observation of Reading Behavior

Running Record Professional Learning Package

PART ONE



Reading Recovery® Council
of North America

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For whom is this professional learning package intended?

This package is for classroom teachers, Reading Recovery teachers, specialist teachers, and pre-service teachers who want to learn to be careful observers of the reading behaviors of children in their early years of schooling.

What is the purpose of the professional learning package?

The purpose is for the teacher to develop skills in recording reading behaviors of early readers. The primary focus in Part One is on the conventions used when taking a running record of text reading and on basic scoring procedures. Future learning packages will focus on scoring and interpreting running records in order to inform teaching decisions.

Systematic Observation of Early Reading Behaviors

An Observation Survey of Early Reading Achievement (Clay, 2002, 2006) is comprised of systematic observation tasks designed to assist the teacher in observing early literacy behaviors. The tasks represent a controlled form of observation requiring systematic and objective recording of exactly what the child does on the task. There is no teaching or teacher support. The teacher has to set aside time from teaching to become a neutral observer of the individual child. The Observation Survey includes standard tasks with standard administration and scoring procedures, providing sound measurement conditions. Read Chapter 1 in *An Observation of Early Reading Achievement* for information about observation as an assessment tool and a tool for teaching. Chapter 2 is also helpful in relating observation to the processes of reading and writing.

Running Records of Text Reading

We strongly recommend that you use the book, *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*, as a resource while using this Running Record Professional Learning Package. The Observation Survey text is **required** for Reading Recovery teachers. Classroom teachers may choose to use Marie Clay's *Running Records for Classroom Teachers* (Clay, 2000).

One of the Observation Survey tasks is a running record of text reading (see Chapter 5 in Clay's Observation Survey or *Running Records for Classroom Teachers*). Running records

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All of the information in this package is adapted from the following sources:

Clay, M. M. (2000). *Running records for classroom teachers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (2002, 2006). *An observation survey of early literacy achievement* (2nd ed., rev. 2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

provide teachers with an assessment of text reading as a child reads orally from any text. If the running record is taken in a systematic way, and the teacher refrains from teaching, it provides evidence of what the child actually said and did while reading the text. These behaviors can be analyzed and provide the teacher with direction for further instruction. Several sessions with a leader who is knowledgeable about running records will be needed before teachers can begin to use a running record as an assessment tool.

Taking a running record should be as relaxing as sharing a book with a child. Invite the child to read to you and tell him or her that you will be writing some things down. This signals to the child that for the next few minutes you will be observing and not teaching.

When taking a running record, you do not need a preprinted copy of the text. The child reads from a book while you record the conventions on a blank sheet of paper or on a form provided in the Observation Survey book or in *Running Records for Classroom Teachers*.

(**Note:** Preprinted copies of text are used in this professional package for learning about administration and conventions **only**.) Clay also cautions against the use of a tape recorder for future analysis because the tape provides no record of the child's actions while reading.

By observing and not teaching during the reading, you will get the most reliable interpretation of what the child said and did to understand the messages in the text. Mastering the conventions for taking a running record will help you to achieve a high standard of observing and recording the child's reading behavior. Refer to pages 58–60 in Clay's Observation Survey or Chapter 3 in *Running Records for Classroom Teachers* for detailed explanations for recording each convention.

The key to accuracy is standard administration and recording. Standard conventions are recommended to take care of almost all of the behaviors you might encounter as you observe a child reading a text. You will be able to compare records across time for a child or compare one child's records with other children you teach if you use a common standard for (a) taking a record, (b) describing what you observed, (c) calculating the accuracy, and (d) interpreting the record.

Scoring a Running Record

Use pages 63–66 in *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* or Chapter 4 in *Running Records for Classroom Teachers*.

A careful study of running records helps the teacher analyze a child's reading behaviors. The teacher can then make immediate decisions about text selection and teaching moves that will support the child's learning.

In this professional learning package, after learning about each convention you will listen to an oral text reading as you follow a prepared worksheet with markings provided. Then you will listen to another reading of the same text so that you can practice the convention on a prepared worksheet. The leader will then provide an answer key for discussion and scoring.

Scoring a Running Record

Use pages 63–66 in Clay's *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* or Chapter 4 in *Running Records for Classroom Teachers* for detailed information about scoring running records. A few general scoring decisions include the following:

- The child gets credit for all correct or corrected words.
- Every inserted or omitted word is an error, but the lowest page score is 0. Omitted pages are not counted as errors, but the number of words on that page must be deducted before calculation.
- If a child makes an error and substitutes the error repeatedly, it counts as an error each time; however, repeated substitutions for proper nouns are counted only the first time.
- Pronunciation errors are counted as correct.
- When a child produces his own version of the text, write 'inventing' for that page or book.
- "Try That Again" (TTA) counts as one error; only the second attempt is scored.
- If there are several ways to score a response, use the method with the fewest possible errors.

Quantifying the Record

Use page 66 in *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* or Chapter 5 in *Running Records for Classroom Teachers*.

Quantifying the Record

Use page 66 in the Observation Survey or Chapter 5 in *Running Records for Classroom Teachers* to determine how to quantify the running record scores. Note that you first have to count the words in the text, excluding the title. After you determine the percent accuracy, you will know how the child was able to read the text:

Was it easy (95–100% accuracy)?

Was it instructional (90–94% accuracy)?

Was it hard (below 90% accuracy)?

Read page 55 in the Observation Survey book for more information about these levels of difficulty.

Continuing to Learn

To become more proficient in taking running records, it is important to practice. Arrange to take running records of text reading with several children (see pages 54–56 in Clay's Observation Survey or pages 8–9 in *Running Records for Classroom Teachers*) and to discuss your records with your leader and/or colleagues. In the next phase of this project, emphasis will shift to additional implications for scoring and to ways to analyze the running records for the children you teach. [Note: Reading Recovery teachers will go beyond these scripts as directed by their teacher leaders.]

Phases of the Running Record Project

The Running Record Professional Training Package will be published in three parts:

- **Part One** focuses on the conventions used in taking running records.
- **Part Two** focuses on scoring and analysis of running records.
- **Part Three** focuses on using the records to inform instruction.