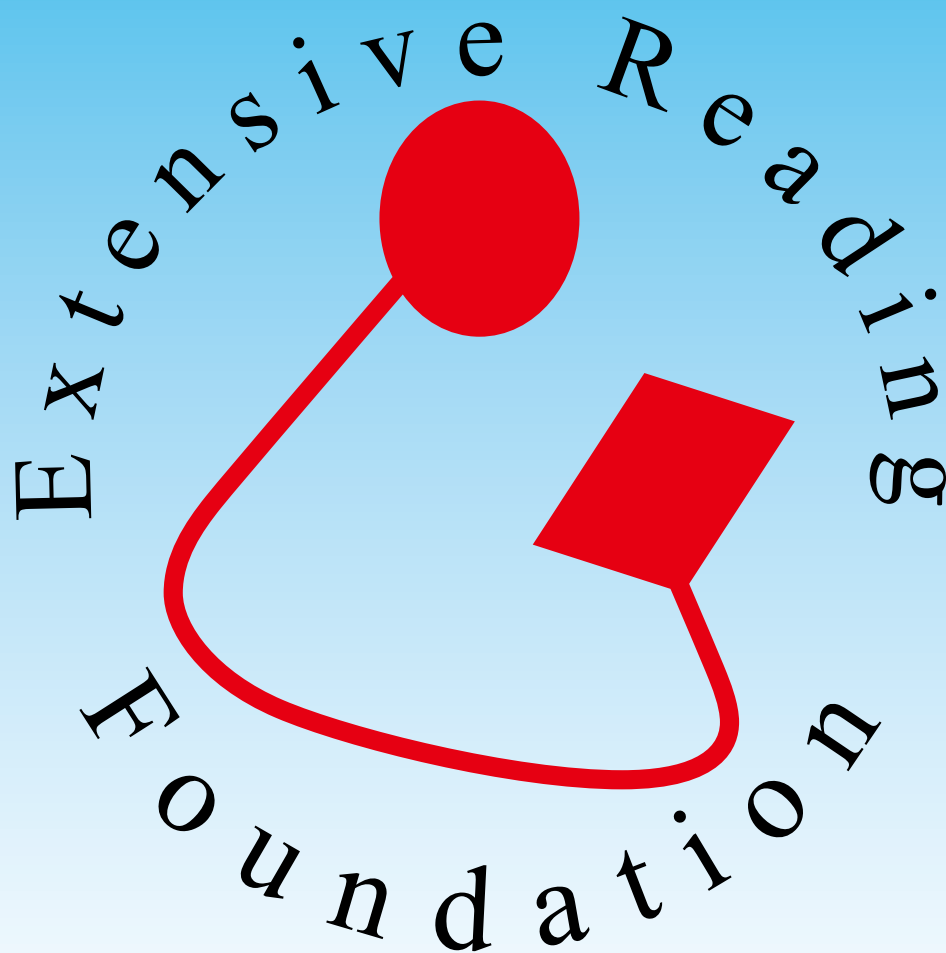


The Extensive Reading
Foundation's
Guide to Extensive
Reading



What is Extensive Reading?

When students read extensively, they read very easy, enjoyable books to build their reading speed and reading fluency. The aim of Extensive Reading is to help the student become better at the skill of reading rather than reading to study the language itself. When students are reading extensively they READ:

- R**ead quickly and
- E**njoyably with
- A**dequate comprehension so they
- D**on't need a dictionary

In order to read quickly and fluently (at least 150-200 words per minute or a little lower for beginning students), the reading must be easy. If there is too much unknown language on the page, it creates problems which slow the natural movement of the eye and affect comprehension and turn the fluent reading into a form of 'study reading'.

Extensive Reading is sometimes known as Graded Reading or Sustained Silent Reading.

Why do Extensive Reading?

There are many reasons why Extensive Reading is good for language development. Extensive Reading:

1. allows students to meet the language in its natural context and see how it works in extended discourse beyond the language met in textbooks
2. builds vocabulary. When students read a lot, they meet thousands of words and lexical (word) patterns time and time again which helps them master them and predict what vocabulary and grammar may come next.
3. helps students to build reading speed and reading fluency which allows them to process the language more automatically leaving space in memory for other things
4. builds confidence, motivation, enjoyment and a love of reading which makes students more effective language users. It also helps lower any anxieties about language learning the students may have.
5. allows students to read or listen to a lot of English at or about their own ability level so they can develop good reading and listening habits
6. helps students get a sense of how grammatical patterns work in context. Textbooks and other study materials introduce language patterns but typically they don't appear often enough in a variety of contexts to facilitate a deep understanding of how the patterns work.

The Extensive Reading Foundation

The Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF) is a not-for-profit, charitable organization whose purpose is to support and promote Extensive Reading (ER). One ERF initiative is the annual Language Learner Literature Award for the best new graded readers in English. Another is maintaining a bibliography of research on Extensive Reading. The Foundation is also interested in helping educational institutions set up Extensive Reading programs through grants that fund the purchase of books and other reading material. The ERF also provides many other services that promote good practice in Extensive Reading. This Guide to Extensive Reading is free and is available for download from our website (www.erfoundation.org).

Extensive Reading and Intensive Reading

There is a difference between ‘learning to read’ and ‘reading to learn’. Both of these are valid forms of reading but they have different aims. When students ‘read to learn’ (Intensive Reading) they are reading a text to learn something about the language itself – maybe a new word, some grammar and so on. We could call it ‘study reading’. This is the typical reading many students do in their textbooks. The passages are short and often have a lot of language the students don’t know. There are typically pre- and post-reading activities and comprehension questions as well. The aim of this reading is to help teach the language or a reading skill such as guessing the topic of an article from its title, or to give examples of say, the past tense which the students will then study intensively.

When students ‘learn to read’ (Extensive Reading), they are practicing the skill of reading by reading for information – reading a story book for example with the aim of enjoying the reading without consciously knowing they are learning. The aim is to build reading fluency - not necessarily to learn new things (although they may learn some), and to deepen their knowledge of already met language items and to get a better sense of how these fit together communicatively. This allows them to process language faster and improves comprehension and enjoyment. Students can also ‘learn to read’ by building their set of reading skills and strategies and by doing speed reading activities designed to improve comprehension speed and overall fluency.

These two forms of reading are complementary. Intensive Reading introduces new language items to the students, while Extensive Reading helps the students practice and get a deeper knowledge of them. The former can be compared with doing driving lessons at a school, the latter with actually driving on the road. Both are necessary. Extensive Reading is usually done with graded readers.

What are Graded Readers?

Graded Readers (also called ‘Readers’) are books (both fiction and non-fiction) written especially for language learners to build their reading speed and fluency and to give them chances to practice ‘real’ reading for pleasure. They are called ‘graded’ readers because they are written according to a pedagogical syllabus which has increasing grades, or levels, of difficulty. They are graded through tight control of the plot, vocabulary, and grammar and judicious use of images. Native books have many words which appear only one or two times whereas publishers control the vocabulary in graded readers to get rid of low frequency words and to make useful words appear more frequently to help learning. Graded Readers are not to be confused with books written for school year ‘grades’.

A series of graded readers may have say, 6-8 difficulty levels from ‘Starter’ to ‘Advanced’ with dozens of books at each level each of approximately equal difficulty. The Starter level books have a very limited vocabulary of highly frequent words and phrases and the simplest grammar. They complement and recycle much of the language students would meet in their ‘Starter’ level textbook. Elementary level books have slightly more difficult vocabulary and grammar, a more complex plot and fewer illustrations, and matches the language taught in elementary level textbooks. The Intermediate level books are more difficult - and so on up to the Advanced levels. In this way, graded readers help students to ‘step-up’ their learning by building on previously learnt knowledge and skills.

There are currently thousands of these books available from dozens of publishers worldwide. A comprehensive list of graded reader series is available on the Extensive Reading Foundation website (www.erfoundation.org).

What are the benefits of using graded readers?

Graded readers:

- allow students to meet lots of comprehensible language
- allow students to ‘step-up’ their reading ability gradually level by level
- provide motivating interesting reading materials
- are a bridge to the eventual reading of native-level reading materials

Kinds of Extensive Reading

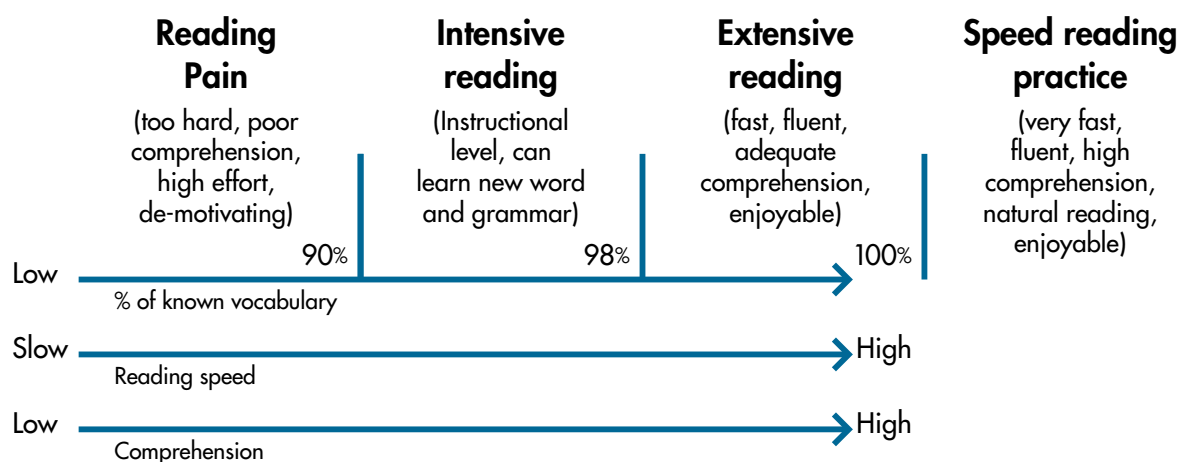
Most Extensive Reading courses have students choose their own book at or about their own fluent reading level. This means all students are reading something different, and in their own ‘comfort zone’. We might call this individualized reading, or self-selected reading and this is sometimes called Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) or Drop Everything and Read (DEAR). Students select their books from the library (often with guidance from the teacher to ensure they are reading at the right level and at an appropriate speed) and either read it in a silent reading time in class, or take it home to read.

Some courses have students read the same book either together in class or as homework, often chapter by chapter over several lessons. In this type of Extensive Reading, typically the teacher prepares the students for the reading with pre-reading activities such as predicting the content or maybe teaching a few key words. The reading is often followed by comprehension questions, discussion and maybe some language work or other activities.

The reading can be considered ‘extensive’ only when the students are reading quickly, with high levels of comprehension and without needing a dictionary. If the reading is too slow it probably means the students need to use their dictionaries often, and so this type of reading isn’t considered ‘extensive’.

Reading at the right level

In order for students to benefit from their Extensive Reading, they should be reading at an appropriate difficulty level and at a good speed (150-200 words per minute or a little lower for beginning students) with a major aim of practicing the skill of reading itself.



Research indicates that if the students know about 98% of the words on a page, then they can read it quickly and with high levels of comprehension. Below 90% (one unknown word in 10) the reading becomes frustrating and slow requiring a lot of dictionary use and comprehension suffers badly. The reading is at an ‘instructional’ level when the students know between 90% and 98% of the words on a page. At this difficulty level, they will know enough of the surrounding language that they will have adequate comprehension but will still need to look up many words if they wish to understand the text better. If the students know 98% or more of the words, then they are in the extensive reading ‘sweet spot’ and can read quickly enough because there isn’t so much unknown language slowing them down and so they can read enjoyably. If the students know everything, or almost everything, on the page, they can then read it very quickly and can use it to build reading speed and their natural reading ability.

Teachers should match the difficulty of the text with the aim of the reading. Students should read at the Instructional level if they wish to learn new things, or in the reading ‘sweet spot’ when the aim is to build

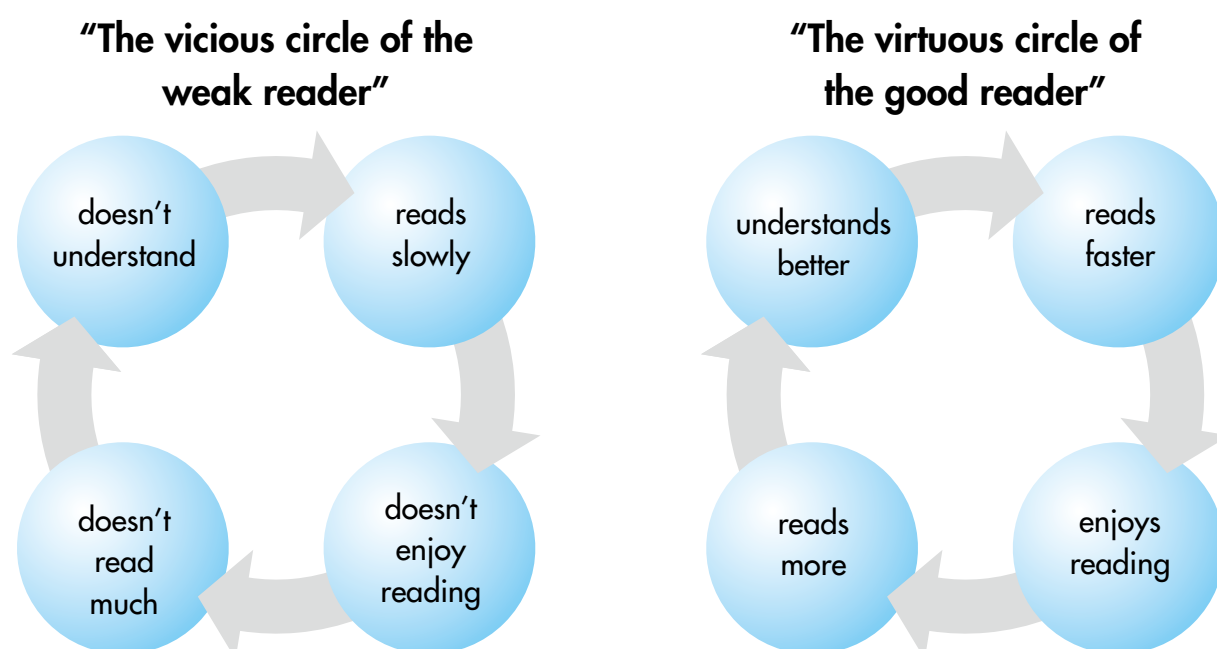
reading speed and fluency. Whether a given text is ‘instructional’ or in the ‘sweet spot’ depends on the ability of the students themselves. Not all students in a class will read at the same level and so a given text might be very frustrating to a low ability student, but very easy for a high ability student.

Using ‘authentic’ books

‘Authentic’ reading materials (those written for native speakers of English) are usually not the best materials with which to teach foreign language learners to read. These are written for English-speaking children or teens who already know thousands of words and most of the grammar of English before they start to read. English language students don’t have this knowledge and usually find authentic books very difficult. Until the students can read these native-level materials without too much trouble, students should use graded readers.

Selecting the right book

Selecting appropriate reading materials can help build reading confidence, reading ability and build a life-long love of reading in English. Conversely, selecting inappropriate materials can lead to a vicious circle of poor reading.



It’s therefore essential that students choose something in their ‘comfort zone’-one in which they can read smoothly, quickly, enjoyably and with very high levels of comprehension. Because only the students know what they can and can’t cope with, selecting the right book is the student’s decision. Teachers must be flexible about allowing students to read at their own ability level, where they feel most comfortable. The teacher’s role here is to provide guidance about the most suitable titles. It is therefore important teachers have read many of the books in their library.

Teachers should be careful to watch that students do not choose their books too quickly. The students should:

- read some of the book itself, not only look at the title, cover and illustrations
- choose something interesting to read. If the book becomes boring or too difficult, they should put it down and read something else
- find something they can read at about 150-200 words per minute
- choose something they can read without a dictionary
- be able to understand almost everything in the book

Planning and setting up an Extensive Reading program

Implementing an Extensive Reading program takes time and commitment. It's not hard to do, but it needs to be done carefully. Extensive Reading programs should have clear objectives and a vision and be structured to demonstrate the commitment of the school and teachers to the program so that students know the reading is important. A good Extensive Reading program should be able to survive lost materials, insufficient resources, and a general lessening in enthusiasm after the highs of the 'big start'.

To be successful, an Extensive Reading program should ideally:

- involve everyone – students, teachers, and maybe even parents
- be part of the teaching timetable and be seen as an essential part of the curriculum
- involve students in its set up and management
- have funding for new reading materials
- have a variety of interesting materials at appropriate levels
- have systems for cataloging, labeling, checking out, recording and returning reading materials
- have clear language learning objectives
- have ways to assess the reading

STEP 1 : Planning your library – 'Think Big, Start Small'

'Think big, start small' means imagining what the Extensive Reading program might look like in five years time. The program needs to be designed so it can grow each year. You will have to answer these (and more) questions:

- How much do students need to read, and how often?
- Should class time be allocated to this? If so, how much and when?
- How many books do we need to cover different levels of abilities and interests?
- Should we integrate Extensive Reading into an existing class, or have a special Extensive Reading class?
- Where should we keep the books? How should we manage the library?
- When, and how often, do students change their books?
- How do we assess the students?
- How do we find money for this?
- Who is responsible for running this program?

Teachers can maximize the amount of reading time by asking students to read both out of class and in class. Some teachers set aside a whole class, or part of a class as a silent reading time so they can monitor the students' reading. If class time is not available, students can read at home, or wherever they like. However, a little class time is needed to allow students to change their books and for the teacher to monitor the reading. Teachers should set a certain time every day/or week when the library is open for students to change their books. It is usually a good idea to start extensive reading in class making sure that learners do it and learn how to do it properly and eventually it can be done as homework.

How much should they read? How many books do I need?

Schools typically ask students to read about one book a week or more. The following equation may help you to decide how many books you need.

$$\text{number of ER classes} \times \text{number of students per class} \times \text{number of books per student} = \text{The number of books needed}$$

For example, a school with four Extensive Reading classes each with 30 students, who each need 3 books to select from, needs 360 books. You might also need class sets of some titles for class reading, so for this school with 120 students, 400-500 books is a good number to cover lost and damaged books. The bulk of your library should be at about the level of your average student with slightly fewer books below and above this level so all students are catered for. If not much money is available, you may need to start with fewer books, in which case

one book per student is acceptable. It's often wise to spend only 80% of your budget initially and spend the rest to adjust your library once you know what materials are most needed.

STEP 2 : Setting up the library – ‘Be Practical and Realistic’

Students need to know how to use the Extensive Reading library, how to check out and return a graded reader using a clear and simple system everyone can understand.

Choosing the books

A wide selection of interesting books is needed to satisfy the needs of different students. Every year, the Extensive Reading Foundation gives its Language Learner Literature Awards to the best graded readers published in that year. These are listed on the website (www.erfoundation.org).

Your library should include:

- both fiction and non-fiction age-appropriate graded readers
- a wide range of topics and genres, including romance, detective, drama, thrillers etc.
- a wide range of books at different levels of difficulty, that suit the level of your school's population
- books that will interest students 5-15 years from now
- some class sets of popular readers, for class reading

There are several options about where to keep the books.

The library	The school library is the best place because they have book borrowing systems already set up. However, not all libraries have the space or staff for a huge increase in book borrowing.
A bookcase	Many teachers keep the books in a bookcase in the classroom, or the teacher's room or even better, a special room only for extensive reading and listening.
Cart	A cart with books on it is easy to move from room to room.
Book boxes / bags	If several classes share the same books, you may wish to split your books into separate boxes or bags to carry to class and every few weeks exchange boxes to ensure variety.

If you have a class set of books all with the same title, keep them separate from the main library or in the teacher's room so that the students don't read them before you use them in class.

Cataloging the books

The publishers of graded readers use different leveling systems for each series of graded readers so you will need to make your own leveling system. Your program will need a level system of about 6-8 levels from easy to difficult. The Extensive Reading Foundation Graded Reading Scale on page 16 shows how some different series from various publishers complement each other.

One simple way to identify books by their levels is to color code each book by putting colored tape or labels on part of the spine. For example, Level 1 books could be marked yellow, Level 2 books marked blue, and so on. Alternatively, you could label the books using a numbering system - level 1, 2, 3 and so on. This allows students to quickly find books at their level and for you to put them in the right place in your library easily. It's not always necessary to make borrowing cards for each book. A simple unique number written inside the front cover of each book will be enough to identify that book. For example, a book numbered G-025 tells you it's a green level book number 25 (or 3-067 tells you it's at level 3, book number 67).

Organizing a book borrowing system

There are several ways to do this - from a very open system, to a very carefully controlled one. An example of a very open system is to allow students to borrow books from a public place whenever they like, and return them after they have finished with them. However, honesty systems tend to lead to a lot of 'lost' books. A more controlled system, and the one that is most widely used, is to have students borrow and return books only at the same time each week. Here are two simple ways to do this.

In Example 1 below, the teacher prepares a single piece of paper for the whole class. Each student records the code for the books they borrow each week against their name and date. When books are returned, the teacher crosses it out to show the book was returned. The advantage of this system is that teachers can see not only which book each student is reading, but the level, too. In the example below, if today is June 7th, we know Ko, Hui-Chia has returned all her books; Miguel still has book Y-072 from May 23rd; and Antonio was absent last week.

Name	May 23	May 30	June 7	June 14
Ko, Hui-Chia	Y-012	Y-167	G-024		
Maldini, Antonio	P-034	X	G-024		
Oliviera, Miguel	Y-072	Y-059	G-024		

Example 2 has a separate sheet for each student. This allows the student to keep a portfolio of their reading. We can also track the number of pages read and note that the student has moved up from the green level (G-145) to the blue level (B-023). A column has been added for students to write a short comment about the book.

Name: Fukumoto, Aya **Student Number:** 12345 **Class:** _____

Title	Reader number	Date borrowed	Date returned	Number of pages read	Comment
Kung Fu Kid	G-084	April 13	April 20	16	Very enjoyable, but a little easy
I Spy	G-145	April 20	April 27	24	Exciting and fun
Anne of Green Gables	B-023	April 27			

STEP 3 : Introducing Extensive Reading – ‘Step-by-Step’

Teachers should introduce the ER program well so that it starts well. Students are usually busy people who may have other classes, a full-time job, or a family (or all of these!) and may not have much time for this reading. Also many students have never read a whole book in English or don’t like reading at all and so may be reluctant to read even if they know it is good for them. Below is a suggested scheme for introducing ER smoothly to students new to ER. There are two main steps - introducing ER with class readers, and then moving on to self-selected reading. These steps are designed to not overwhelm the students initially and gradually build to self-selected reading.

The first step – Whole Class Reading

This first stage models ER by asking students to do some reading as a class so they get used to the idea of reading a longer text. The teacher should start by choosing a very easy book – one that even the weakest student can read so then all students will be able to grasp the notion of ER. You will need multiple copies of the same book, at least one for every two students. The aim at this stage is to make the reading easy and focus on enjoyment and quick reading so you can later contrast it with the more difficult reading they are probably doing in their textbook.

- Day 1.**
1. Show the book to the students. Ask them to look at the book. You may want to point out any important features of the book and ask them to predict what the book may be about.
 2. They read a few pages silently to a pre-set point e.g. the end of the first chapter. They close their books and give them to you. (Alternatively, they could listen to the story being read aloud from the audio recording).
 3. Write some simple questions on the board (even in the students’ first language) such as ‘Who are the characters?’ ‘Where does the story take place?’ ‘What is happening?’ ‘What will happen next?’ and so on.
 4. Ask them to answer the questions with their partner, and then answer them as a class.
- Day 2.**
5. Remind students of the story from the previous class. They predict what will happen next.
 6. Read a few more pages with them, and follow up with a few simple questions.

- Day 3.**
7. Continue this for a few classes until the book is finished.
 8. Ask what they thought of the story and how this reading is different from the reading passages in their textbook.
 9. Explain to them the aim of this type of reading is not to study language but for them to practice reading and build reading speed and the reason they can do this is that it's easy. You may need to tell them that even though they know most of the language in the book, they are still learning because they are practicing their reading and picking up their reading speed.

Repeat these steps with other books until the students get the idea of easy reading.

The second step – Self-selected Reading

When students are used to their easy reading as a class, it is time to introduce them to self-selected reading.

Stage 1 – Student orientation

This stage allows the teacher to explain to students why this type of reading is important. This is a good time to emphasize that the textbook and the Extensive Reading should work together, and to remind them that they need to read for fun so they can put the language they learn in their textbook into practice.

Stage 2 – Student's first book

Put a selection of the easiest books from your library on a table for students to look at, and let them look through them. Explain to the students that they can choose any book they want to read but it should be at their ability level. See page 4.

At this early stage, point out the features of your cataloging system:

- How the books are leveled (for example, using a color coding system, or numbers).
- The numbering system used to catalogue individual books.
- How students borrow and return their books.
- How students decide what level they should read.

Once students have decided their reading level and chosen a book, they read silently in a silent reading time for about 10-15 minutes while the teacher goes around the class quietly asking questions. 'How is the book?' 'Is the level OK?' 'Is it easy for you?' 'Is it enjoyable?' 'Do you understand it?' and so on. If it's not suitable, allow them to change their book.

Then ask students to check out the book. They can bring it to every class (you may find a few minutes at the end or beginning of a class which you can use as a silent reading time).

Stage 3 – Out of class reading

After students have read a few books in class, explain that they need to read out of class too. Initially, this can be for a very short period, for example 20 minutes a week. Slowly increase the amount of reading each week over the course or even a full year until they are reading one book a week.

When students finish their book the students should:

- discuss it with other students or do other follow-up activities (see pages 13-15)
- return it to the 'book drop box' and choose another one
- help the teacher to check in books and return them to where they are stored

Evaluating Extensive Reading

Teachers often feel they should check students' understanding of their reading directly through tests and quizzes or even just to assess whether the reading has been done. In Extensive Reading, as long as students are reading a book at their level, there is then no need to test their comprehension. This is because part of the decision about which book to read involved making sure they could understand most of the book before reading it. Extensive Reading is not about testing. It is about helping students to build their reading speed and fluency, and become more confident readers in English. These things are not always testable directly. However, many institutions insist on formal assessment of the reading and so this section presents some ideas for assessment.

Online test of graded readers

Teachers want to know the students have actually read their books. One way to do this is to give each of them a test but this is difficult to do when each student is reading a different book. On the Extensive Reading Foundation website there is a free online graded reader testing system which can do this. Teachers set up an account for their class and assign a login name and password. The student logs in and selects the book they have been reading, they take the test and are told if they pass or fail. The teacher is told how many and which books their students read and whether they passed the test or not and the students build up a "stamp collection" of book covers which enhances their motivation to read.

For more details go to www.erfoundation.org/assessment.html

Indirect assessment

1. Book reports, summaries, presentations and posters

Students can write or present oral book reports and summaries or make posters and presentations that summarize the content of the book. They could also comment on the characters in the book, the plot, or their reactions to it. Lower ability students might do sentence completion activities such as 'my favorite character was ... because ...', or 'I (didn't) like this book because ...', or write their reactions in their first language.

2. Giving grades

You can grade the students by the number of pages or words they have read; how many reading levels they go up, the quality of their written or oral book summaries, their participation in follow-up ER activities, and so on.

3. Measuring reading speed

At the beginning of the course, ask them to read a book at their level for three minutes. Then count the number of words they read and divide that by three to get the number of words per minute. Repeat this in the middle and at the end of the course or even every week if you wish. They may wish to make a chart to record their progress.

4. Informal monitoring

A silent reading time each week gives the teacher a chance to watch students as they read silently.

- Do they look like they understand? Or look bored or disinterested?
- Do they smile when they read funny parts of the story, or look a little apprehensive in exciting moments?
- Are they sitting in a way to enjoy the book, or trying to hide that they are sleeping?
- Do they turn pages often? Do they seem to be reading slowly (say, by moving their finger along the page)?
- Do they have to re-read parts of their books? Do they use their dictionary a lot?

5. Informal oral comprehension checks while, or after, reading a book

These questions can help you know if the student has understood their reading, or finished it.

- Can they re-tell the story with little trouble? They may need to do this in their first language.
- Can they react to the story freely by saying what they liked or disliked?
- Find key lines from the story and test them on who said them, or places they visited.
- Ask 'What is it about?' 'Who are the main characters?' 'What's happening on this page?'
- Ask how it ended. Was it a sad or happy ending? Why? What genre is this book?
- Do they look at the book as they are answering your questions as if looking for something to say?

Questions and Answers about Extensive Reading

This page answers many of the most common questions teachers ask about Extensive Reading.

If the students just read, what does the teacher do?

Just because the teacher is not teaching does not mean learning has stopped. When the students are reading, the teacher can speak quietly with each student to check they are reading at the right level, are enjoying their books and have done their reading. You can read in a foreign language too to show that it's not only students doing it.

Why are they not doing their reading?

There are many possible reasons:

- Their books are too difficult, or not interesting for them.
- The students are busy and have too much homework from other classes.
- They don't like reading. Some students may prefer to listen silently to the audio recording instead.
- The reading is optional and the students have decided to opt out. The reading should be required.
- The teacher is not constantly checking that the reading is being done and so the students don't do it.
- The students need to be motivated to read more.

How much reading should they do?

Research suggests they should be reading a book a week or more at their ability level.

They are already busy enough. How can I do this if there's no time in my curriculum?

Teachers and schools can opt out of doing Extensive Reading, but opting out means the students won't:

- get enough practice in actually reading and improving their reading speed.
- meet enough language to deeply acquire the grammar and vocabulary they are meeting in their textbooks.
- get the satisfaction of being able to read fluently in a foreign language.

Therefore, schools should consider changing the curriculum to make ER an essential part of the curriculum.

How can I do ER if I have to teach them to pass tests?

A major reason many students often do poorly on a standardized test such as TOEFL or TOEIC is that they can't read fast enough to finish it. If they can read fluently, then they can read the test passages faster and will have better comprehension. Moreover, reading only short passages intensively from test preparation books doesn't provide enough practice to learn to read fluently, so they need to read longer extensive reading materials, too. Research shows that students who read extensively do better on tests than those who spend the same amount of time doing test preparation activities.

They won't stop reading things that are too difficult, what do I do?

This is not a problem if they have enough background knowledge and are enjoying the book. It only becomes a 'problem' when it becomes tiresome and demotivating. Try to encourage the student to stop reading something difficult and come back to it later once their ability has increased.

Should I require the students to read, or ask them to read voluntarily?

Ideally it's best to have the students read voluntarily but most often students will resist because they are busy even if they know it is good for them. If the extensive reading is optional, many students will opt out. Teachers should explain why, and how, this reading will help them and introduce ER as part of the course, not as an option.

When can they find time to read?

Most people have a little 'down' time each day for reading. If the reading is not done in class time, they should try to find a regular reading time each day, for example before going to sleep, or on the bus to school.

When can my students start using graded readers?

Before students start to read extensively on their own, they need to be familiar with the written alphabet, be able to recognize a hundred or so very common words and a small amount of very basic grammar. The easiest

series of graded readers start at very low levels so that ER can start early (see page 16). In English, the sound of a word doesn't always match its spelling, so a course in phonics will be very beneficial, or essential for some students.

Can students use a dictionary when they read?

When reading to build fluency and reading speed, students should be reading easy enjoyable books. If they are looking up words too often, then the book is probably too hard for them, and they should read something easier.

Should students read the books aloud?

Teachers should read aloud to the students sometimes because it can help the students match the spoken sound of a word with its spelling and helps them get a feel for sentence level pronunciation. Teachers who are not comfortable reading aloud can use the book's audio recording. Reading speed is faster than listening speed (speaking speed) and so while reading-while-listening may have some benefits, it should only occupy a small part of the program. However, many students dislike reading aloud in class because they are anxious about their pronunciation and fear embarrassment. Also, reading aloud and thinking at the same time is very difficult, so their reading is likely to be slow and flat, and ample practice is necessary to get good results.

Is it okay if I ask the students to translate the reading into their first language?

A central feature of Extensive Reading is to select materials that the students can read quickly and with high levels of comprehension. This allows the students to process language quickly and automatically in English. If students are asked to translate their reading, this forces the student to go back to their first language, which is counter-productive in developing automatic language processing. In Intensive Reading where the text is quite difficult, translation can be used from time to time to aid understanding.

Do they only have to read Graded Readers to build their fluency?

No. Students should read anything that they can read quickly and fluently. However, recent research shows that greater fluency gains come from reading graded readers than both graded readers and unsimplified texts. Reading speed courses are almost always successful and are a very useful accompaniment to an extensive reading course.

Books have gone 'missing'. What do I do?

It is normal for books, especially the most interesting ones, to go 'missing' so it's worthwhile having multiple copies. But because books are missing does not always mean the students are stealing them. It maybe they lost them or forgot to return them and they are too embarrassed to say so. Put a notice around the school saying that books can be returned to a 'drop box' outside the teacher's room at any time.

Should the parents be involved in the reading?

Asking students to take books home is an excellent way to show parents that the school cares about their child's learning. For younger students, it is very good if the student reads with (or to) his/her parents. Having a special time every day or week with a parent or older sibling (just before bed, after dinner, and so on) re-enforces the habit of reading. Some schools ask the parents to fill in a short form after reading to answer questions about whether the student understands the books. This also develops good communication between the school and home.

How do I keep students motivated with their reading?

Keeping high levels of motivation is a key to successful reading. Here are some ideas:

- Give each student a reading partner to share their reading experiences and troubles.
- Give prizes for the most books read, the best reports, the greatest gain in reading speed and so on.
- Ask the students to help select books for the library and get them to help manage the borrowing systems.
- Ask them for ideas about how to decorate the library and display the books.
- Ask students to vote on the top ten books in the library.

Extensive Listening - Using Audio and Video

Extensive Listening is the sister to Extensive Reading. Students need to not only build their reading fluency, but also their listening fluency, too. They need to meet input through extensive listening to build up their automaticity in recognizing words aurally and to get a sense of how the language fits together. As not all students like to read, teachers should provide opportunities for extensive listening, too.

Almost all graded readers come with audio recordings, some of which can be downloaded for free from the publisher's website, or they can be purchased. Some series may have a video accompanying the graded reader, too. The recordings are usually a very high quality and so students can listen-while-reading to help them enjoy the book. The recordings also help them to recognize the sound patterns, intonation and pronunciation as well and it is a good model for them to follow.

Many schools put the book and the audio recording (on a CD) in a packet (or put a sleeve in the back of the books to hold the CD) and the student can either a) just read, b) just listen or c) listen-while-reading. For variation, they can read first, then listen, or listen first and then read.

Teachers and students should be aware that a student's fluent reading ability is unlikely to be the same as their fluent listening ability. Research suggests that for many students, their listening vocabulary size and access speed is much lower than their reading vocabulary (research suggests a half or a quarter of the size) and so they may need listen to books one or two levels lower than their reading ability. To help them find their own fluent listening ability, you could prepare a short section from the recordings of books at various difficulty levels and play them to the class. As they listen from the easiest to more difficult passages one by one, they note down where their comfortable listening level is.

Many modern CD players and personal music players, allow the speed of the recording to be slowed down if it is too fast for the learners. There is also free software available online for teachers to download and edit the recordings (when allowed by copyright) such as by slowing down the recording speed, or speeding it up (useful for helping to develop listening speed). This software can easily be found by doing an Internet search.

Here are some suggestions for making the most of the audio recordings from graded readers:

- Use the audio as a serial story, by playing a few pages each day/week.
- Some graded readers are plays which can be listened to and acted out by the students.
- After students have read the whole story, ask them to close their books and play the audio all the way through without stopping. This will help their listening fluency. To make listening easier, they can cover the text and just look at the photos and illustrations as they listen.
- For pronunciation practice, choose a section of the book with spoken dialog. Play the audio and pause after one sentence of the dialog and ask students to repeat it. Replay the sentence and have students repeat it again. Do this as a class rather than individually.
- Photocopy some pictures from the book and ask students to order them as they listen.
- Have students listen globally first (overall understanding), then re-listen for local (detailed) information.
- Have one student listen to the story, while another reads it. They compare their understanding.
- The teacher reads part of the text aloud while making mistakes, students read and listen for errors.

Ideas for Extensive Reading activities

First day of class

Find out the students' reading history. What do they read? How different / similar is reading in L1 and L2?

Ask students to bring in a sample of what they read in English, or their first language.

Discuss their beliefs about reading. *Is it best to read slowly and carefully or quickly? Do you have to understand everything? Is it ok to use a dictionary? Where's the best place to read? Who should decide what I read? etc.*

When choosing books / reading material

Point out the features of books, blurbs, glossaries, comprehension sections etc.

Put many titles on a desk and they discuss which covers are best and which look interesting to read.

Have a 'Book Hunt'. Make a quiz with questions they answer by finding the book. *Which book has 5 stories? Which book is a love story with Maria and Felix? Which book did David Andrews write?*

Copy several illustrations from books, ask the students which book they come from and why.

Predict the story from the title and cover, artwork. Predict when or where it takes place, the characters etc.

Look at the cover and blurb, then they make questions about the story before reading. They read it to find the answers to their own questions.

'My favorite book' discussions help others choose good books. The most popular books can be labeled with a star on the cover or 'best read' or 'class favorite' stickers.

Getting students involved

Ask students to categorize their books into genres and note this information inside the book cover.

Have students help select new titles from publisher's catalogues.

Ask students to go to local libraries and bring back recommendations.

Ask students to be 'library monitors' – helping check out, return and shelve books, make displays etc.

Ask them to donate books if they buy them. They write 'Donated by xxx, date' inside the cover.

They can help raise money for the library by holding a readathon or asking for donations, or by selling things at the school festival etc.

Students assess whether a book at the level they're reading is higher or lower than the average book at that level. The teacher re-assigns the book to the new level if it needs to be changed.

Ask them to make a class/school blog or webpage with book reviews and recommendations.

Put 'review cards' inside each book cover for students to rate the book with stars or smiley faces.

Students vote on the top ten books of the semester.

Get students to help you build a reading lounge somewhere in the school.

Ask them to make 'genre' displays. They could make a display of horror stories or romances, for example.

Hold a 'reading marathon' e.g. at a school festival. Students compete to read the most in a set time – e.g. 8 hours. Books at different lengths or difficulties could be labeled '3km' or '5km'. They have to read 42km (a marathon distance). This can be used to ask people to sponsor people to read at say \$1 per book, or 1000 words and use the money to buy books.

Start a Book Club / Reading Corner at your school.

Building reading fluency

Re-read the same passage again but 10% faster.

Read against the clock. E.g. they try to read x number of words in say 3 minutes.

Race their partner to a certain part of the book (make sure they understand it)

Record their feelings of the book as they read and re-read the same story to see if their feelings are different.

When the whole class reads the same story together

If the book is a movie or a famous classic, show a trailer for the movie before reading it.

For famous stories, ask students what they already know about the book, author, plot etc. e.g. Romeo and Juliet, Jane Eyre, Shakespeare, The Jungle Book, Charles Dickens.

Have students read the same book with different tasks – one person looks for words and phrases, another makes character notes, another records the plot, another finds cultural points and so on. They compare.

10 questions. One student thinks of a character or place from the book, the other guesses what it is using yes/no questions only. *Are you old? Do you have a sister?* They have only 10 guesses.

After reading a chapter, the teacher makes some true/false questions. The team with the most correct answers wins. They make a role-play of a section from the book taking on their character and tone. Use their own words or ones from the book. They can act it out in front of the class.

Students enact a scene relating the same emotion of the characters (for fun, emotional scenes can be done in a different tone – e.g. a romantic moment in an exciting tone, a sad moment in a happy one.)

Stop them at key moments and imagine what sounds the characters can hear, and what they may see and smell.

They discuss what would be good gifts, punishments, cars, food, clothes, homes etc. for the characters.

Play / read a short section of a chapter and stop. The students guess what's going to happen.

Pick out key sentences from the story. Who said it and why?

Discuss if the title, art work and cover suit the story once they've finished reading it.

Write an ordered summary of the story in one line sentences. Cut it up and students re-order it.

With non-fiction readers, research the places (people, countries, companies etc.) mentioned in the book.

After reading a book, they watch the movie (if available). They discuss the differences.

Photocopy the art or chapter titles from the book, they put them in order or use them to re-tell the story.

Give a list of adjectives describing characters from the book (daring, stubborn). They guess who it is.

Predict what happens after the end of the book, or they write a synopsis of a follow-up sequel.

Students pretend to be a character and are interviewed afterwards – especially good with crime stories.

They make a time-line of events – useful for stories with flashbacks.

Transfer information from the text to a map, chart or table (useful for non-fiction work).

Re-write / re-tell part (or all) of the story from a different character's perspective.

Analyze each key moment and they decide if they would have done the same thing in that situation.

Make a profile of the characters – their habits, hobbies, what they eat, their work, clothes etc.

Musical chairs. Students sit in a circle facing the middle. One person stands in the middle and asks question such as *If you know the main character's name, change chairs*. Students race to the empty chairs. The one left standing makes the next question. E.g. *If you read book xyz, change chairs*.

They retell the story as a chain. Student 1 says the first event in one sentence, the second does the next and so on.

Sharing

Ask students to re-tell their story in 4 minutes, then again to another person in 3 minutes and to a 3rd person in 2.

Have an interesting library with posters, displays, post book reviews on the walls.

Have them look at all the books in the library, tell them to make a reading list for the semester. Share it.

Have a wall chart showing which student has read how many pages.

They keep a 'reading log' of what they have read throughout the week/semester. Everything from textbooks, readers, road signs, posters, adverts etc. They discuss this with others.

Students say how their story relates to their life (or not).

Re-tell the story in their own words. Listeners think of 2 questions as they listen.

Compare how the same book (e.g. Jane Eyre) from different publishers is different or similar.

Make a questionnaire based on a class reader at the end of the course.

Writing

Write a different ending to the story or re-write part of it as a screenplay for a movie.

Re-tell the story as if it were a character's diary.

Make a short poem about the story, or from one character to another (good for romances)

Draw a map of the places in the story and follow the route describing what happened where.

Compare the characters in the book to themselves. Who is similar to them? Who is different?

Make a class quiz about 'who said what?' or other aspects of the story.

Write about an imaginary day with one of the characters.

Write a letter / email to one of the characters.

Write a character review explaining their strengths and weaknesses, habits, background etc.

Draw a picture of a scene or two and re-tell what they are about. They should not copy images from the book.

Draw write a summary of the story – one event per line. Cut them up and students listen and re-order them.

Write to the publisher / author telling them what you think of the book.

Extensive Reading Resources

Books and articles:

Day, R. and J. Bamford, 1998, Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom, Cambridge University Press.

Day, R. and J. Bamford, 2004, Extensive Reading Activities for Teaching Language, Cambridge University Press.

Waring, R. The inescapable case for Extensive Reading.

http://www.robwaring.org/papers/waring_Nova_2011.pdf

Websites:

The Extensive Reading Foundation:

www.erfoundation.org

The Extensive Reading Pages:

www.extensivereading.net

The Extensive Reading discussion List.

groups.yahoo.com/group/extensivereading/

ER Moodlreader:

www.moodlreader.org

The Japan ER Association:

www.seg.co.jp/era/

The Korean English Extensive Reading Association;

www.keera.or.kr

The Extensive Reading Bibliography:

www.erfoundation.org/erf/bibliography/

Rob Waring's ER website

www.robwaring.org/er/

SSS Reading Levels and Word Counts

www.seg.co.jp/sss/reading_level/A/index.shtml

The Extensive Reading Foundation's Guide to Extensive Reading

		Beginner			Elementary			Intermediate			Upper Intermediate			Advanced		
Alphabet	Early	Mid	High	Early	Mid	High	Early	Mid	High	Early	Mid	High	Early	Mid	High	
Cambridge University Press																
Cambridge English Readers	51-100	101-200	201-300	301-400	401-600	601-800	801-1000	1001-1250	1251-1500	1501-1800	1801-2100	2101-2400	2401-3000	3001-3600	3601-4500+	
Discovery Readers			Starters	1	2	2	3	4	3	4	5	6	5	6		
Cambridge Storybooks	1	2	3	4												
Heinle, Cengage Learning																
Foundations Reading Library	1,2	3,4	5,6	7												
Footprint Reading Library						1	2	3	4	5	6	7,8				
Page Turners Reading Library		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			
Macmillan																
English Explorers	1,2	3	4	5	6											
Macmillan Children's Readers	1	2	3	4						5,6						
Macmillan Readers			Starters		Beg		Elem	Pre-Int	Int.	Int.	Int.	Int.	Int.	Int.	Int.	
Oxford University Press																
Bookworms and Faciles			Starters	1	2	2	3	4	4	5	6					
Dominoes			Starters	1	2	2	3									
Classic Tales		Beg. 1,2	Elem 1	Elem 2	Elem 3											
Penguin																
Penguin Readers			Easy-starts	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	5	6			
Penguin Active Reading			Easy-starts	1	2	2	3	3	4	4						
Penguin Young Readers	1	2	3	4												

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