Running Records are taken to:

- guide teaching
- match readers to appropriate texts
- document growth overtime
- note strategies used
- group and regroup children for instruction

How to Take Running Records

(adapted from Alphakids Assessment Kit Teacher's Guide)

Running Records capture what children know and understand about the reading process. They capture children's thinking. Running Records provide you with an opportunity to analyze what happened and plan appropriate instruction. From Running Records, you have evidence of what the child is able to do, ready to learn, and learning over a period of time. Noted researcher Marie Clay designed this very effective and widely used tool.

A Running Record is not just the recording of right and wrong words. It requires observing all behaviours to help determine the "thinking process" children are using as they read the text. A correct response does not necessarily reveal the thinking a child is using unless they have verbalized or shown through body language (e.g., eyes go to the picture, finger moves back across the text) their mental processing. A Running Record provides you with a playback of an entire oral reading conference, including the smallest details on the reader's attitude, demeanour, accuracy, and understanding. With this information, you can analyze behaviours, responses, competencies, initiatives taken, and in turn, determine instructional needs. You are therefore encouraged to record all behaviours children display during reading conferences. Running Records are also a critical piece of assessment for the formation of dynamic (changing regularly) guided reading groups, and allow for the selection of "just right" texts and the teaching of appropriate strategies. Running Records allow you to document progress over time when an initial or baseline record is compared to a more recent one.

Taking a Running Record

To take a Running Record, sit beside a child as he or she reads a selected portion of the text aloud in a natural and relaxed environment. It is necessary to select a time when you can hear the child read without interruptions, such as when children are engaged in quiet reading or on independent literacy activities. Observe and record everything the child says and does during the reading. You will find yourself noticing more and more about children's reading behaviours each time you take a Running Record. Because there is a set code for recording, all teachers can understand and then discuss, analyze, and plan teaching strategies for the child or small groups of children.

Recording

The following conventions provide a consistent approach to recording reading behaviours. (Based on Clay 1993, Kemp 1987, and Goodman & Burke 1972) With these notations, every effort the child makes is recorded in detail. For a readily available recording sheet, see page 12.

Behaviour	Notation	Example
Correct response	Mark every word read correctly with a check mark.	✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ Can you see my eyes?
Substitution	Write the spoken word above the word in the text.	✔✔ ✔ the ✔ Can you see my eyes?
Omission	Place a dash above the word left out.	✔ ✔ ✔ _ ✔ Can you see my eyes?
Insertion	Insert the added word and place a dash below it (or use a caret).	✔ ✔ ✔ ✔big ✔ Can you see my eyes?
Attempt	Write each attempt above the word in the text.	✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ e-ey Can you see my eyes?
Repetition	Write R after the repeated word/phrase and draw an arrow back to the beginning of the repetition.	✔ ✔ ✔ ✔R ✔ Can you see my eyes?
Appeal* (asks for help)	Write A above the appealed word.	✔ ✔ ✔ A ✔ Can you see my eyes?
Told word	Write T beside the word supplied for the reader.	✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ Can you see my T eyes?
Self-correction	Write SC after the corrected word.	✔ ✔ ✔ the/SC ✔ Can you see my eyes?

*An appeal for help from the child is turned back to the child for further effort (e.g., Say: *You try it.* If the child is unsuccessful, the word is teacher-given (told word).

Note

Insertions add errors. A reader could have more errors than there are words on a line. However, a reader cannot have more errors than words on a page.

Scoring a Running Record

You can use the following scoring to assess a child's performance.

1. Count only the running words in a text. Running words do not include titles, subtitles, captions, and so on.

2.

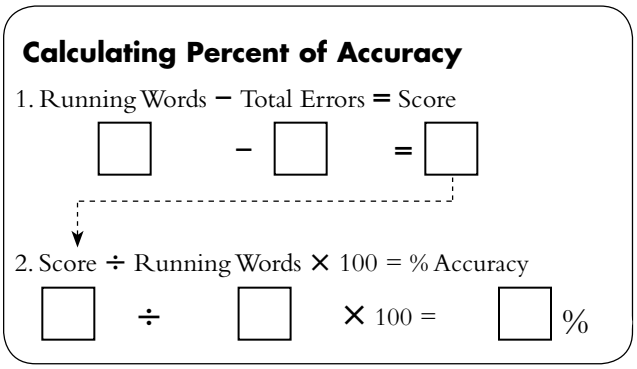
Count as one error:	**Do not count:**
◆ a substitution	◆ self-corrections
◆ an omission	◆ repetitions
◆ an incorrect attempt	◆ a correct attempt
◆ an unsuccessful appeal	◆ a successful appeal
◆ a told word	◆ words pronounced differently in a child's dialect or accent
◆ an insertion	

3. Count each word in a skipped line as an error.

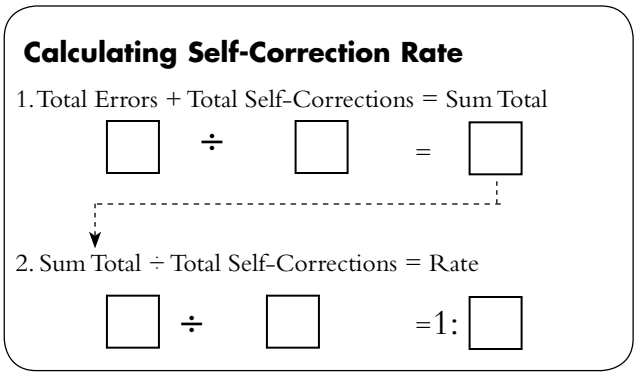
4. Count a skipped page as one error and subtract the word count for that page from the total word count.

5. Count proper nouns read inaccurately only once. Count other words read inaccurately each time.

6. Calculate the Percent of Accuracy for a record by subtracting the total number of errors made from the number of running words in the text. The answer will then be divided by the number of running words.



7. Determine the Self-Correction Rate for a record. The Self-Correction Rate indicates how well a child self-monitors his or her reading. Calculate this rate by adding the total number of errors to the total number of self-corrections and dividing this sum total by the total number of self-corrections. For example, six total errors plus two self-corrections equals eight. If you divide eight by the total number of self-corrections, the answer is four. The self-correction rate is then recorded as 1:4, which shows the child self-corrected one time for every four words misread. A Self-Correction Rate of up to 1:5 shows the child is self-monitoring and using decoding strategies.



8. Once you have calculated the Percent of Accuracy and the Self-Correction Rate, you can determine whether the reading level for that book is easy, instructional, or hard for for a particular reader.

Understanding Percentages

Easy Text (96-100%)	Appropriate Instructional Text (93-95%)	Challenging Instructional Text (90-92%)	Hard Text (Below 90%)
Move child to higher text level.	A comfortable instructional text level.	Child may require more direct support.	Move child to lower level.

Easy Texts (96-100%)

When children read an easy text, they are able to read for enjoyment and meaning. There are no decoding challenges. Easy texts are appropriate for independent reading.

Appropriate Instructional Texts (93-95%)

These texts are selected by you, and have many supports and very few challenges for the reader. They are at the higher-end of what Clay has identified as Instructional Texts (90-95%). Because you are usually working with a group of children and not individuals, it is difficult to match texts appropriately to the background knowledge and instructional strategies of an entire group. These texts are appropriate for guided reading.

Challenging Instructional Texts (90-92%)

These texts can be more challenging for a child or group of children. A text at this percentage may require too much work. A guided reading text should provide only one or two challenges and be a supported, comfortable read.

Hard Texts (Below 90%)

These texts have too many challenges for children to read.

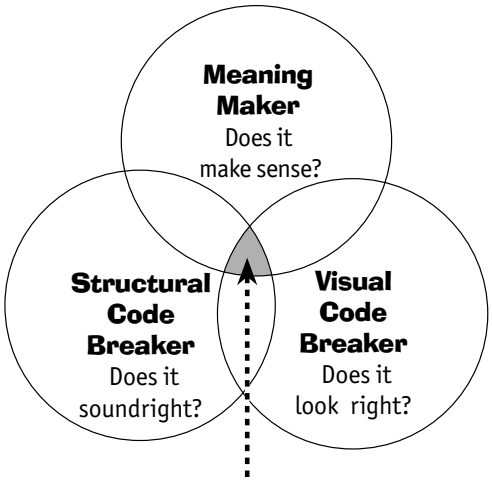
Analyzing Reading Behaviours

Once a record of a child's reading has been taken, it is necessary to analyze the strategies, cues, and behaviours he or she is using (or not using).

When analyzing a child's reading performance, it is your "best guess" (using all the knowledge gathered about the child) of the process or "reading thinking" that is happening. To acquire a useful analysis, it is important to determine whether readers are using meaning cues, structural cues, or visual cues.

Self-Monitoring Strategies
- ignored obvious errors
- paused/stopped
- repeated word(s)
- tried something else
- self-corrected
- self-corrected and re-read to confirm
- integrated cueing systems (Ⓜ, Ⓢ, Ⓥ)

Integrating the Cueing Systems



Ⓜ Meaning Cues

Meaning cues relate to a reader's ability to gather a book's basic message by making meaning of it at the text, content, and word level. If readers are using meaning cues, they think and evaluate what they read. They check whether the sentence "makes sense." Meaning-appropriate errors (miscues) do not interrupt the general comprehension of the sentence or paragraph. A meaning miscue may be syntactically appropriate, but may not have a letter-sound correlation.

When analyzing a Running Record or Record of Reading Behaviours, it is important to look at all the errors the child makes. For each error, answer the following question: *Does the child's attempt make sense considering the story background, information from pictures, and meaning in the sentence?* If the answer is yes, the child has used meaning cues, and is Ⓜ circled in the error column.

Note
The same cue can be used while making and self-correcting an error.

When dealing with self-corrections, consider what caused the child to make the error in the first place. If meaning cues were being used while the error was made, Ⓜ is circled in the error column. Then consider what cues the child used to self-correct. If meaning cues were used for the self-correction, Ⓜ is circled in the self-correction column.

	Cues Used		
✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ woods There are many trees in the forest.	Ⓜ	Ⓢ	V

In this example, the reader substituted *woods* for *forest*. With this substitution, the sentence still makes sense and sounds right. Therefore, the reader used both meaning Ⓜ cues and structural Ⓢ cues. However, the reader did not use visual cues since the words do not resemble each other in any way.

S Structural Cues

Readers who use structural cues are relying on their knowledge of the grammar and structure of the English language to make the text sound right. Using this knowledge, readers check whether or not the word or sentence sounds right.

When analyzing a Running Record or Record of Reading Behaviours, it is important to look at all the errors the child makes. For each error, answer the following question: *Does the child's attempt sound right considering the structure and syntax of the English language?* If the answer is yes, the child has used structural cues, and Ⓢ is circled in the error column.

When dealing with self-corrections, consider what caused the child to make the error in the first place. If structural cues were being used while the error was made, Ⓢ is circled in the error column. Then consider what cues the child used to self-correct. If structural cues were used for self-correction, Ⓢ is circled in the self-correction column.

V Visual Cues

Visual information includes the way letters and words "look." Readers use their knowledge of the visual features of words and letters and then connect these features to their knowledge of the way words and letters sound when spoken.

When analyzing a Running Record or Record of Reading Behaviours, it is important to look at all the errors the child makes. For each error, answer the following question: *Does the child's attempt visually resemble in any way the word in the text (e.g., begins and/or ends in the same letter)?* If the answer is yes, the child has used visual cues, and Ⓥ is circled in the error column.

When dealing with self-corrections, consider what caused the child to make the error in the first place. If meaning cues were being used while the error was made, Ⓥ is circled in the error column. Then consider what cues the child used to self-correct. If visual cues were used for self-correction, Ⓥ is circled in the self-correction column.

	Cues Used		
poor I swim in a pool.	M	S	Ⓥ

In this example, the reader substituted *poor* for *pool*. With this substitution, the sentence does not make sense nor does it sound right based on the grammar and syntax of the English language. However, the two words resemble one another visually, so the reader used visual Ⓥ cues.

Note
Readers should be using more than one cueing system at a time.

Strategies To Look for While Children Are Reading:

- Looking at the pictures.
- Questioning whether it makes sense, sounds right, and looks right.
- Finding little words in big words.
- Reading to the end of the sentence.
- Looking at the punctuation marks.

The goal for readers is to integrate the cueing systems while reading for meaning. For example, a child might look at a word, make the sound of the first letter, think of a word that would make sense, sound right, and match the visual features of the word. This child has initially used visual information, thought about meaning and structure, and then checked the prediction against visual information. This happens quickly, and the child's focus remains on meaning.

Self-Monitoring Strategies

After all errors and self-corrections are analyzed, you should also reflect on the following to help assess a reader's self-monitoring strategies to guide further instruction:

- Does the reader repeat what he or she has read as if to confirm the reading so far?
- Does the reader notice when cues do not match?
- Does the reader pause as if he or she knows something does not match but seems to not know what to try?
- Does the reader request help (appeal) frequently? after several attempts?
- Does the reader rely on only one cue, or does the reader integrate cues?
- Does the reader check one cue against another?
- Does the reader read with phrasing and fluency?

Sample of a Completed Record

Running Record Sheet

Name Brendan Date Oct. 9 Book Title (Level) ~~Endangered Animals~~ Endangered Seas (M) Number of Running Words 94

Self-corrections are analyzed first in the error column; then in the self-correction column.

	E	SC	E	SC
			(L) (R) (U)	(L) (R) (U)
✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ Many fish have become endangered in the last				
✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ 50 years because of overfishing and changes				
✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ to their home. Two of these fish are the wild				
✓ sawlmon ✓ ✓ Atlantic salmon and Pacific salmon.	1		MSV	
	1		MSV	
✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ What has put the Atlantic				
✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ salmon in danger? Overfishing.				
✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ For many years they were caught				
✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ in large numbers. People soon				
✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ realized that the Atlantic salmon				
✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ might disappear forever. They				
✓ ✓ bath/sc ✓ passed laws banning large-		1	MSV	MSV
✓ scale fishing.				
✓ ✓ counters ✓ ✓ But some countries ignore the	1		MSV	
✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ Arctic laws and still catch Atlantic	1		MSV	
✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ salmon in large numbers.				
✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ Wild Pacific salmon face many				
treats ✓ ✓ ✓ threats from people, including	1		MSV	
✓ ✓ destruct/sc ✓ overfishing and destruction of		1	MSV	MSV
✓ ✓ ✓ rivers and streams.				
Total	5	2	216	222

Analyze the errors the child has made. Which cues has the child used?

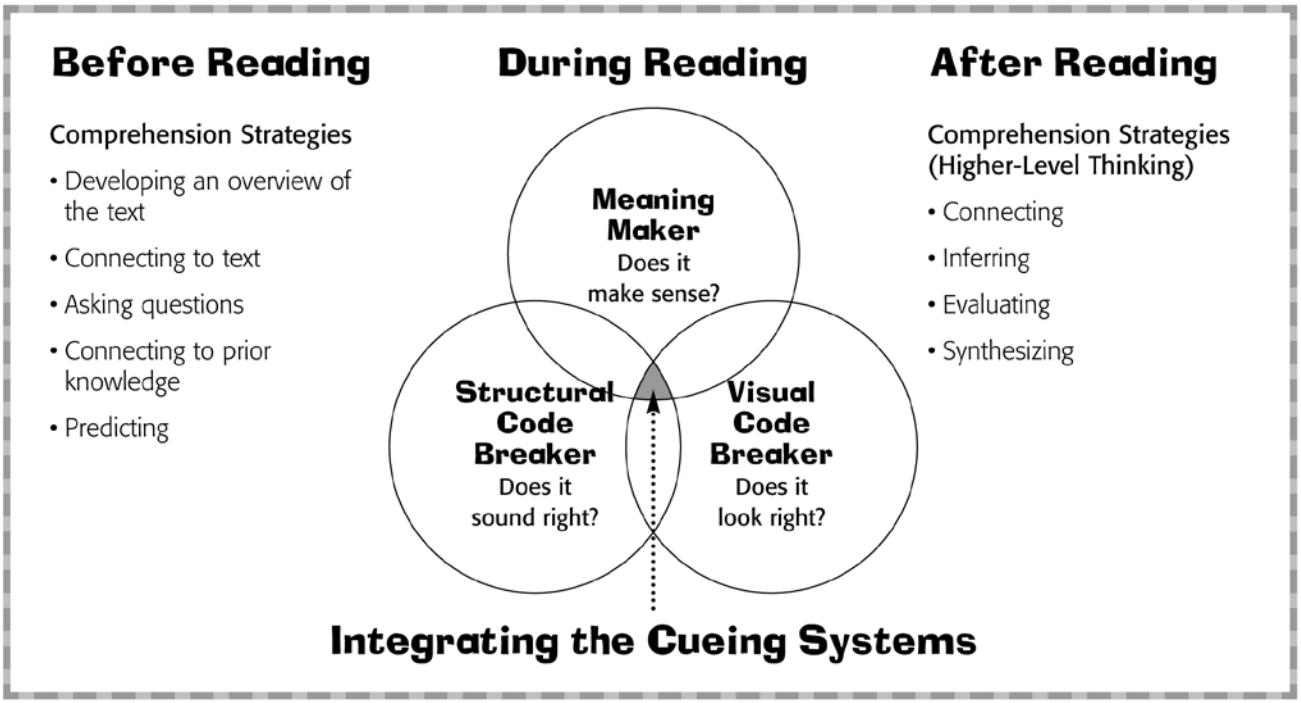
- (M) Did it make sense?
  - ❑ Did meaning influence the error? Did the child make a meaningful substitution (e.g., *lion* for *cat*)?
- (S) Did it sound right?
  - ❑ Did the child's response still fit the structure (syntax) of the sentence (e.g., *the* for *a*)?
- (V) Did it look right?
  - ❑ Did the child's response show evidence of information gathered from the print (e.g., *police/pirate*)?

Observations
-good self-correction rate

Add up the cues in the analysis columns to see which ones the child predominately uses.

Diagnostic Reading Conferences

Diagnostic Reading Conferences allow you to determine the cues children are using to read, the appropriate text level for them, their interests and understanding of a text, and their ability to make inferences. This information is gathered before, during, and after a child's reading.



Conducting a Diagnostic Reading Conference

- **Select the text.** First, select a text from an appropriate level for a child by looking at the concepts or strategies the text assesses. If a child does not use most of these concepts or strategies to read, the text level will be too hard. If the child uses some of these concepts or strategies, the text level may be "just right." If the child uses and integrates these concepts or strategies consistently, the text level may be too easy.
- **Introduce the text.** The introduction is important for developing the background information each child needs to read the text. The text introduction is brief and natural. After introducing the text, let the child preview the book. (To ensure consistency of assessment, it is important that each child is introduced to the text in the same way).
- **Take a Running Record.** Indicate where the child should begin reading aloud. If the text is a short one, the child should read the whole selection (even if the recording is not done on the last few pages) and complete the conference right after. For a longer text, pre-select a logical starting and stopping place of at least 150 words. The child then goes off to complete the reading on his or her

own and later returns to complete the conference. Before the child begins reading, remind him or her that you will be asking for a retelling once the reading is complete. Then ask the child to begin reading aloud. Take a Running Record or use a Record of Reading Behaviours to record the child's reading. (Only the pages the child is asked to read aloud are recorded.)

Retelling details

Fiction:
- characters
- plot and setting
- problem/solution
- vocabulary from text

Non-fiction:
- main ideas
- important facts
- supporting details
- specialized vocabulary

- **Ask for a retelling/summary.** Comprehension can never be based onreading performance alone; therefore, retelling is a vital part of the Diagnostic Reading Conference. Unaided retelling consists of children retelling the story/facts any way they choose. Simply introduce the retelling session with: *Tell me all you remember about the story.* With this prompt, most children re-create the story by including characters, setting, and/or the underlying theme. If children need encouragement, provide non-contented related prompts, such as: *What else do you remember? Tell me more.* If children are still non-responsive, content-related prompts are required.

  When assessing a child's retelling, listen for:
  – general understanding of the story
  – accurate reporting of events (non-fiction)
  – sequencing of events
  – words and phrases used from the text
  – connections to personal knowledge and experience
  – use of effective vocabulary
  – elements of character and setting
  – supporting details (non-fiction)

Comprehension Strategies
- making personal connections
- making inferences
- being a text critic
- understanding author's purpose
- gaining information and details from non-fiction texts

- **Check comprehension/higher-level thinking.** Following the oral reading session and the retelling, conduct an interview with the child to assess his or her understanding of the text. This interview consists of questions related directly to the events/facts in the story, inference questions, and critical-thinking questions. This helps children develop their roles as text users and text critics.

- **Conduct an interest survey.** Motivation is strongly linked to attitude; therefore, it is important to note the books children enjoy reading, their favourite authors, whether they like to read at home, and if someone reads to them outside of school. Conducting an interest survey is important in choosing texts for guided and independent reading. Note that an interest interview does not have to be conducted during each conference, perhaps just two or three times a year.

- **Check fluency.** Fluency is a critical factor in reading control. Fluency and accuracy are all highly related to comprehension. Comprehension is affected if children read slowly, attending too much to working out words and taking long pauses. Fluent reading means solving problems on the run, something all children must do if they are to gain understanding of a text. Children who read accurately, quickly, and in phrased units have much better comprehension and are more likely to read for pleasure.

  While taking the Running Record, record any relevant notes about a child's reading fluency for reference when completing the scale.

- **Analyze the record.** After the conference is completed (and while the class is still working independently), go over the record while it is still fresh in your mind. Fill in any observations (e.g., looked at pictures, read through punctuation) you want to include, and calculate and circle the percent of accuracy of the child's reading. If the child has made errors and/or self-corrections, analyze the cues (Ⓜ, Ⓢ, Ⓥ) he or she used. This information guides the text selection for instructional and independent reading.

- **Analyze the interview.** Assess the child's personal connections, responses to the comprehension questions, and his or her retelling. This will help you determine whether the child has understood the text, made personal connections, and what the child's interests are in reading. If the child was able to decode the text but unable to comprehend the story, the text level needs to be dropped to the point at which the child understands the story. Specific emphasis on comprehension through all components of a balanced literacy program becomes the focus of instruction.

- **Make instructional decisions.** Instructional decisions are critical in terms of building children's ability to read increasingly difficult text. A child should not be held too long in a level, when they could be reading more complex texts. Moving them ahead before they integrate the needed strategies will make it more difficult for the child to read and comprehend the text easily. Text difficulty usually affects the fluency rate as well.

  You can use the analysis chart to help make instructional decisions for the child. After analyzing the reading record and reflecting on the conference, instructional decisions need to be made. Using the completed analysis charts, you can decide on strategies for specific children to consolidate or learn next. A strategy should be taught in a shared context and then practised in guided and independent reading. Guided reading continues to scaffold for the children before independence occurs. The self-monitoring strategies are best taught through shared reading practices.

Running Record Sheet

Name _____ Date _____ Book Title (Level) _____ Number of Running Words _____

	E	SC	Information Used	
			Ⓜ Ⓢ Ⓥ	Ⓜ Ⓢ Ⓥ
Total				

Analyze the errors the child has made. Which cues has the child used?

Ⓜ Did it make sense?

❑ Did meaning influence the error? Did the child make a meaningful substitution?

Ⓢ Did it sound right?

❑ Did the child's response still fit the structure (syntax) of the sentence?

Ⓥ Did it look right?

❑ Did the child's response show evidence of information gathered from the print?

Observations

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