When a text is too hard, students begin to struggle and use less appropriate learning strategies. They learn much more from reading a text that is instructional or easy. Running records will provide you with direct information on the appropriateness of the text for each student and on the reading behaviors students are using. Running records should be taken with a familiar text, and it is critical that the text not be too hard. *Running Records for Classroom Teachers* by Marie Clay is an excellent resource for teachers who wish to learn more about using running records in their classrooms.

PURPOSE OF THE RUNNING RECORD ASSESSMENT

The information gained from running records empowers the instructor by providing them with a wealth of information. Running record assessments have several purposes:

- To collect information to make critical instructional decisions about the student
- To make decisions about group placement/changing group placement
- To assess the student's ability to read a book (decode print and construct meaning) at specific levels of difficulty
- To record the student's oral reading for analysis of skills/strategies and documentation of growth over time and against grade level competencies
- To determine reading skills/strategies the student uses to decode print and construct meaning from text

Running record forms with the printed text for Literacy Footprints (one at each text level for Levels A–Z) are available at literacyfootprints.com/assessments. The running records may be downloaded and printed for assessment purposes. Alternatively, teachers may prefer to use a blank running record form to take a running record, which is available in the Teacher Assessment Record Book at literacyfootprints.com/assessments.

HOW TO TAKE A RUNNING RECORD

To prepare the student for the running record assessment, instruct the student to read the book aloud without assistance. Tell the student to do whatever they normally do when reading alone and come to a part that is difficult. If you are assessing for comprehension, tell the student that after they finish reading the book that they will be asked to retell the story/book as if telling the story to a friend who has not read the book.

If the student has difficulty:

- If the student stops reading, wait three seconds, and then encourage the student to continue reading (e.g., *Try it.*).
- If the student is unable to continue, tell the student the word.
- Do **not** ask the student to reread or prompt for any decoding strategies. This would invalidate the running record.

While the student is reading, make notes about how they are reading. You should do the following things:

- Code each response by the student as they read.
- Note and count each error and self-correction by totaling the correct number in the total errors and self-correction columns.
- Analyze each error and self-correction to note the cues used. For every error and self-correction, ask yourself these three questions:

  M Did the meaning or the messages of the text influence the error? Perhaps the reader brought a different meaning to the author's text.
  S Did the structure (syntax) of the sentence up to the error influence the response?
  V Did visual information from the print influence any part of the error?

  When an error or self-correction is made, write the letters M, S, or V in the appropriate column. Circle the letters if the student's error showed that they could have used meaning, structure, or visual information. **Consider the sentence only up to the point of error (not the unread text).**

CONVENTIONS FOR TAKING A RUNNING RECORD

1 Correct Responses
$\underline{\quad \checkmark \quad}$

2 Substitutions (counts as an error)
Student: *home*
Text: house

3 Self-corrections
Student: *home* SC
Text: house

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4 Insertions (counts as an error)

Student:	*here*
Text:	—

5 Omissions (counts as an error)

Student:	—
Text:	house

6 Student attempts to sound out a word (record with lowercase letters) (counts as an error unless student says word correctly)

Student:	*n-o-t*
Text:	not

7 Student spells the word (record the uppercase letters) (counts as an error unless student says word correctly)

Student:	*N-O-T*
Text:	not

8 Student repeats or rereads (does not count as an error)

Student:	√	*come*	R
Text:	She	came	

9 Record all attempts at a word

Student:	*here*	*h-*	*home*
Text:		house	

10 Student stops and cannot proceed. First the teacher says, *You try*. If the student still does nothing, the teacher tells the word.

Student:	*home*	
Text:	house	YT

11 Student appeals for help. Suggest the student try it before telling.

Student:	—	A	*here*
Text:	house	—	YT

12 Student gets confused and can't seem to continue, the teacher may ask them to *Try that again*. Put brackets around first attempts and record second attempt.

First attempt:

Student:	√	[*we*	*white*	√	TTA]
Text:		Susan	went	with	me

Second attempt:

Student:	√	*said*	SC	√	√
Text:		Susan	went	with	me

Look at the overall pattern of responses you have circled so that you can bring your analysis of errors and self-corrections together into a written summary.

To explain the error, consider the student's behavior up to the point of the error. To explain a self-correction, consider what might have led the student to spontaneously correct the error.

1 **Scoring the Accuracy and the Self-Correction Rate.**

To score the accuracy and error rate of the reading, use the following formulas. Record on the front page of the running record:

ACCURACY RATE

$$\frac{\text{Total Words - Total Errors}}{\text{Total Words}} = \text{Accuracy Rate}$$

SELF-CORRECTION RATIO

$$\frac{(E + SC)}{SC} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

2 **Analyze the Errors and Self-Corrections.**

Analyze errors and self-corrections to determine whether the student uses meaning (M), structural information (S), and/or visual information (V). Make a summary statement about the problem-solving (or lack of problem-solving) strategies the student uses at the top of the running record.

3 **Rate Fluency.**

Use the Fluency Rubric to consider the student's ability to read in a phrased manner, smoothly, with a good pace, and with good expression.

FLUENCY RUBRIC	
Word-by-word reading No expression	1
Slow reading with a mix of word-by-word and phrased reading Some expression	2
Mostly phrased reading with a moderate pace Mostly appropriate expression	3
Smooth and fast-paced reading Consistent, appropriate expression	4

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4 **Assess Comprehension.**

• Remove the text. Ask the student to retell what they read. Say, *Tell me what happened in this book*. Rate the retelling using the Retelling Rubric. You can prompt the student with phrases such as *Tell me more*, or *What else happened?* without affecting the rating.

• Ask the comprehension questions. We have provided sample answers on each running record, but use your best judgment when scoring the responses. If the student answered the question during the retelling, simply give credit for the answer.

RETELLING RUBRIC	
Recalls little or no information	**1**
Retells most of the information (main ideas/facts)	**2**
Retells all important information and adds personal thinking and inferences	**3**

5 **Reflect.**

• What did you learn about the student as a reader?
• Does the student read accurately? Consider their errors and how to improve accuracy.
• Does the student read with phrasing and fluency? If not, provide more instruction in fluency.
• Does the student understand what they are reading? If not, provide more opportunities for discussion of themes, concepts, and story structure to help the student build deeper understanding of what they are reading.

Use this information to plan the next steps for your students.

This material is adapted from
Running Records for Classroom Teachers, Marie M. Clay. Heinemann. © 2000 Marie M. Clay.