

# How to Measure Reading Volume

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When we want to examine the volume of reading, we have three possible measures that all work pretty well. We can simply record the time the student has spent reading, we can count the number of pages the student read, or we can count the number of words the student read. All three measure provide us with volume information and all three have been used in various studies of reading volume. Here are the strengths and weakness of all three approaches to gathering data on reading volume.

Measure	Strengths	Weaknesses
Time spent reading	Simplest to measure	Some kids read faster
Number of pages read	More accurate than time	Some pages have more words
Number of words read	Most accurate	Takes more time to collect

I prefer gathering data on the number of words that were read because it seems to me to be the most reliable evidence, but I have also gathered both time spent reading and number of pages data as measure of reading volume. But when some students are reading 100 words per minute and others are reading 200, the data do not actually reflect the differences in reading volume. Likewise with pages read, because when struggling reading are reading a *Frog and Toad* book and the better readers are reading a *Junie B. Jones* book, the page totals do not adequately represent the differences in the number of words that were read. When we count (or estimate) the numbers of words that readers actually read, we get the most precise information on just how much reading practice has actually occurred.

The most efficient way to gather words read data is to use a words per line and lines per page method. Basically, the procedure you would use goes like this:

1. Select the text the student has been reading (noting, of course, which pages were read).
2. On any of the pages read, count the total number of words in 5 lines of typical print, and divide the number of words by 5. This gives you the typical average number of words per line on the pages.
3. Then count from 5 consecutive pages the number of lines of print on each page and divide by 5. This gives you the average number of lines per page.
4. Count the total number of pages read, and multiply that number by the average number of lines, and then multiply that number by the average number of words per line. This gives you the total number of words read.

*What Really Matters in Response to Intervention*, Allington, 2009, p. 63.