



State of Israel
Ministry of Education
The Pedagogical Secretariat
Languages Department
Inspectorate for English Language Education



THE JOY OF READING

Independent Reading / Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)

Independent Reading

A classroom guide for elementary EFL
teachers



What SSR builds toward

By reading independently, pupils work toward these A1 can-do statements.

- Understands illustrated stories and short texts written at their level, rereading as needed.
- Recognizes key words and phrases in simple, illustrated stories read independently.
- Understands short descriptions of familiar places and things, with picture support.
- Uses simple words and sentences to say how a book made them feel.

Adapted from Can dos: Basic User I (A1), English Curriculum 2020, Ministry of Education.

When pupils are ready for quiet reading



WHEN TO BEGIN

Begin SSR only after pupils can decode familiar words and follow a simple text.

LET THEM CHOOSE

Put a Book Box together for each class. Fill it with books that you are familiar with and be sure that they are age, level and interest-appropriate. Teach them how to use the Five Finger Rule (scroll down to Slide 6).

Remember! Pupils choose books they can read with ease and enjoy.

READ WITH THEM

Read alongside pupils to model quiet reading.

A gradual path to independent reading

Use pupils' decoding and understanding to decide when quiet reading can begin.

GRADE 3: BUILD THE BASE

Dialogic Storytelling

Develop listening, speaking, sound awareness and familiar words. Point to print and use pictures.

GRADE 4–5: MOVE TOWARD SSR

Browse, then read quietly

Begin with 3–5 minutes of supported browsing. When your students are ready, allow them to read silently or with a partner for 5–7 minutes of SSR once or twice a week.



READ

SSR – Sustained Silent Reading

It means setting aside a short, regular period when students read quietly and independently, usually choosing a book that is appropriate for their level and interests.



Why Use SSR?

- Process English at their own pace.
- Read without the anxiety of performing in front of classmates.
- Build stamina and concentration.
- Encounter common words and sentence patterns repeatedly.
- Develop automaticity and reading fluency.
- Experience reading as communication and enjoyment rather than only as an exercise.

It is particularly useful for students who already have basic decoding skills and enough English vocabulary to understand simple texts.



Important Note

Silent reading should not be used as the main method for teaching beginning reading.

Teacher card: before, during and after SSR

2 MIN

BEFORE

Show covers or pictures and help pupils choose an accessible book.

5–7 MIN

DURING

Pupils read at their own pace for anywhere between five to seven minutes. Read alongside them. Let them switch a book that they're struggling with.

3 MIN

AFTER

Invite the students to say a few words about what they've just read.

READING TIME Start SSR with 5–10 minutes once or twice a week. Increase as readers are ready.

The right book matters

Choose a graded reader with mostly familiar words and enough pictures to support meaning.

0-1

Easy

Most words are familiar. Reading flows.

2-3

Just right

A few new words invite discovery.

4+

Too hard for now

Try it with a partner or save it for later.

Graded readers, comics, illustrated books and rereading all count.

Find Your Comfort Zone: The Five-Finger Rule

A simple method for elementary learners to independently select "Just Right" books.

How to Check Your Book

- 1 Open to the Middle**
Pick any random page in the middle of the book to start.
- 2 Read One Page**
Read the page normally; if you hit a word you don't know, stop.
- 3 Put Up a Finger**
Every time you see a word you don't recognize, put up one finger.

How many fingers did you put up?

Fingers	Level	Verdict
0-1	Fingers: Too Easy	★ The Verdict: Give yourself a challenge!
2-3	Fingers: Just Right	★ The Verdict: You found your Comfort Zone!
4-5+	Fingers: Too Hard	★ The Verdict: Try again with a different book.

Choose books that help you grow as a reader! ♥

Build a classroom book box



START WITH EASY BOOKS

Include graded readers, comics, illustrated stories and short nonfiction.

KEEP BOOKS CLOSE

Use a box on each table so pupils can choose quickly.

CHANGE THE CHOICE

Rotate books and ask pupils what they want to read.

When SSR needs support

Match each challenge with a practical response.

A PUPIL KEEPS SWITCHING BOOKS

Changing a book is fine. If it happens every lesson, help the pupil find an easier or more interesting title.

A PUPIL IS NOT YET READY

Read aloud or share a book together. Offer picture-book browsing and short supported reading.

THE ROOM IS NOISY

Practise a short, clear quiet-reading routine.

SSR TROUBLESHOOTING

Quick solutions for common SSR challenges

1. STUDENT KEEPS CHANGING BOOKS 	WHY? The book may be too difficult or not interesting.	SOLUTION Help them use the Five-Finger Rule. Find a "just right" book on a topic they enjoy.
2. STUDENT SAYS "I DON'T LIKE READING." 	WHY? They haven't found the right book or reading feels hard.	SOLUTION Start from interests, not level alone. Let them browse. Celebrate small wins and choices.
3. STUDENT CANNOT DECODE INDEPENDENTLY 	WHY? The text is too hard to read fluently on their own.	SOLUTION Use audio-supported reading. Or try paired reading with a supportive partner.
4. STUDENT FINISHES EARLY 	WHY? The book was too easy or they read very quickly.	SOLUTION Choose another book and keep reading. No extra worksheets or busy work.
5. CLASS IS NOISY 	WHY? The routine is new or expectations are unclear.	SOLUTION Start with 5-7 minutes and build up. Teach and practice "reading voices".
★ TEACHER HAS NOTHING TO DO?		
 Read your own book and model.	 Conference with 3-4 students quietly.	 Be present, supportive, and a reading role model.

My Reading Journey: an optional response

PUPILS

If they wish, pupils point to a picture or share a word with a partner for two minutes.

TEACHERS

Offer the sheet occasionally, with no book report or required response after each session.

KEEP THE FUN IN READING

Protect reading time and choice. Any sharing stays light and voluntary.

MY READING JOURNEY



Name: _____

Class: _____



1. BOOK DETAILS

Book Title: _____

Author: _____

Today I read pages: _____ to _____



2. HOW DID TODAY'S READING MAKE YOU FEEL?



excited

☐

very happy

☐

happy

☐

neutral

☐

sad

☐

nervous

☐

mad

☐

3. MY REFLECTION

Complete one sentence starter.

Today, I read about _____

My favorite character did _____

I predict that next, _____

A new word I learned was _____



4. SIGNATURES

Parent Signature (home reading): _____

Teacher Signature (school reading): _____

