

My Favorite Stray Cat: Reading Fluency 3

As children begin to read on their own, they need lots of practice to get better. They need to be able to read words **accurately**, with **expression**, and at a **good speed**. Sometimes parents think children should understand and remember everything in the story the first time they read it. But children often need to talk about a story or to read it several times to really **understand** it.

To increase fluency, follow these three steps. First, before reading the story, ask questions to help your child focus on it. Second, read the story to your child and then help your child read the story to you. Third, after you read the story, ask your child questions about it.

Here are some ways to help your child improve her reading fluency.



Before Reading *My Favorite Stray Cat*

Before reading a story, have children think about how it may connect to their own lives. One way to help children make connections is to ask questions. With the story, *My Favorite Stray Cat*, ask, Do you know anyone who has a cat? What is a stray cat? Are there stray cats in your neighborhood? Then have her read the story to see if there are things in it that she didn't know before.

Read *My Favorite Stray Cat*

Sit down with your child to read *My Favorite Stray Cat*. Sit next to your child so that both of you can see the story. Read the story out loud to him. Try to read with expression. For example, use a worried voice when you read, "Rosie was scared. It's dangerous being a stray cat. What if something happened to Frankie?" Point to the words as you read them. Read slowly enough that your child doesn't get lost or confused. This helps him become familiar with the story and learn new words and how to pronounce them so that he can read **smoothly**. Then, if your child feels confident, have him read *My Favorite Stray Cat* out loud to you. You follow along quietly to notice how well he is doing and if he is having difficulty with any particular words. This method works best with a story that your child is familiar with. If he struggles, read the story together or take turns reading each sentence—you read a sentence, then your child reads the next sentence.



After Reading *My Favorite Stray Cat*

A good way to get your child to remember more about what she has read is to ask her questions that will get her to think more about the story. You can make up your own questions or ask some of the following. Questions like these help her think more about the meaning of the story.

- Why wasn't Rosie supposed to feed stray cats?
- Do you think that Rosie was right to give Frankie part of her hot dog?
- How would you feel if you were Rosie?
- How would you feel if you were Frankie?
- What would you do if you saw a stray cat?
- What part of the story did you like the best? Why?

Have Fun

If you or your child gets tired, stop and come back to the story and activities on another day. The more your child enjoys reading and doing the activities, the more fluent in reading she will become.

Note: You can use these same activities with another story or book. You can follow the same order of activities, or you can change the order or choose the activities that you think will be most helpful and the most fun for your child.



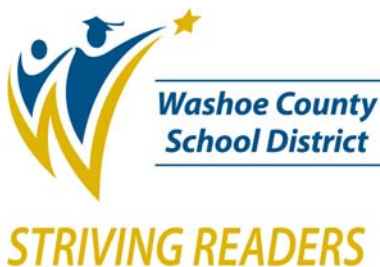
More Information

My Favorite Stray Cat is the most advanced of the three tip sheets for improving children's fluency. If your child has difficulty with the activities in this tip sheet, we suggest that you ask for the first tip sheet on fluency, *The Two Best Cakes: Reading Fluency 1*, or the second tip sheet, *How Many Elephants Would Fit in a School Bus?: Reading Fluency 2*. After trying the activities in those tip sheets, come back and try this tip sheet.

If your child is having a hard time with these activities, talk to your child's teacher. There may be another tip sheet or other activities to help. If you enjoy these activities, tell your child's teacher. The teacher may have more ideas to share for learning fun at home.

Watch Families Doing Activities

To see families doing these activities, please go to: www.washoestrivingreaders.com. Next, click on the **Community and Families** tab at the top of the page then select **Family Literacy Videos** from the drop down menu. Finally, scroll down the page and click on the video and tip sheet that fits your family's needs.



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My Favorite Stray Cat

Rosie knows not to feed stray cats. Even if they are cute, she isn't supposed to. She can't give them tuna. She can't give them milk. She can't give them even a little cat food. Her mother says, "No!" So when a cat slinks by Rosie's front porch, she waves hello, but that is all. When a cat creeps under her window at night, Rosie says, "Good night, Mr. Kitty," but that is all. When a cat approaches her on the playground at school, she shows him her math homework, but that is all.

Of course there is one exception. His name is Frankie. It's okay to feed Frankie, because he isn't a stray. Nobody knows it, but Frankie is Rosie's cat.



They met on the Fourth of July. Rosie was at the park with her family watching the fireworks. Rosie was bored. Each firework was the same. One was green, and one was red, but they were all just loud noises. As the whole town looked to the sky, Rosie looked at the ground. Frankie was waiting for her.

Like everyone else in town, Frankie was watching the fireworks. A skinny little tabby cat with a tail that went swoosh-swoosh-swoosh, he liked the orange fireworks the best. Rosie whistled—she had just learned to whistle—and the cat came to say hello.

"Hello," said Rosie. "What is your name?"

The cat said nothing. Rosie would have to name him herself. She thought about the Fourth of July. She thought about the founding fathers. She remembered her favorite: Benjamin Franklin.

While her family watched the fireworks, Rosie held out the end of a hotdog bun. Frankie ate it right up. She offered a chip, and Frankie ate that too. Finally, for dessert, she gave the cat half of her hotdog. Frankie meowed to say "thanks," and Rosie knew they would always be pals.

That summer, she fed Frankie every day. He came each day at four o'clock. She would take him whatever she could find—anything her mother wouldn't notice. Frankie was not picky. He ate cheese straws, tater tots, and corners of grilled cheese sandwiches. Once, on a very hot day, she let him eat the end of her Popsicle. As always, he meow-meow-meowed to say thank you. She did not know where he went after he ate, but she knew he would always come back the next day.

Soon, summer was over and school started. Right after breakfast, Rosie walked down to the corner to catch the school bus. She had to watch for Bus #2. The high school kids caught Bus #6 at the same corner, and Rosie did not want to end up at high school!

Each day when she got home from school, Rosie would wait for Frankie to show up at 4:00 and give him whatever food she could find. About two weeks after school started, Frankie did not come to Rosie's house. He did not appear on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.

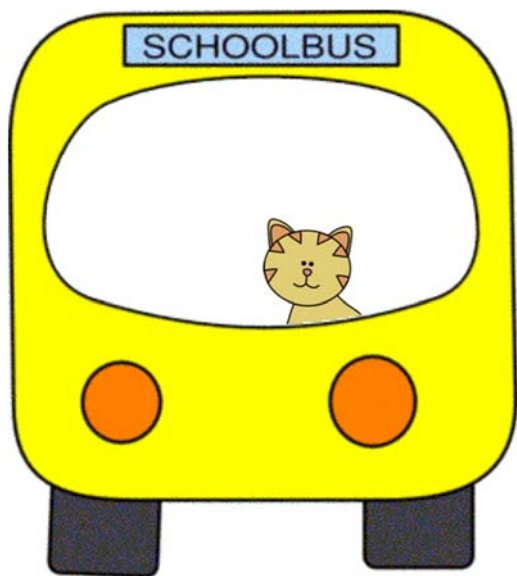
Rosie was scared. It's dangerous being a stray cat. What if something happened to Frankie? Each day of the week, as soon as she got home from school, Rosie stared out the window looking for Frankie. When no cat appeared, she got gloomier. By Friday, she was so gloomy that she couldn't hide it any more.

"What's wrong?" asked Mom. "You look pretty sad for a girl who is going to get pizza on this Friday evening."

Rosie couldn't help it. She told her mother everything: about the fireworks, the meowing, even the Popsicle! She was afraid her mother would be angry, but Mom looked sympathetic. "Well Rosie, let's put some food out for Frankie before we leave to get the pizza."

As they backed out of the garage, Rosie saw Bus #6 pass their house. The high school kids were just getting home. Mom followed the bus down the street and stopped behind it while the kids got out at the corner. Rosie looked up at the bus and couldn't believe her eyes. There was Frankie in the back window looking right at her! She could almost hear him meow.

"Mom, mom look! Frankie's on the bus! I've got to get him." Mom said, "Just a minute, Rosie. The bus is about to leave. Let's follow it to the next bus stop." As soon as the bus stopped down the block Rosie unbuckled her seat belt and ran to the bus door. After the high school kids got out, she hopped up on the step. She heard Frankie say, "Meow." Suddenly she didn't know what to say.



The bus driver said, "Did you want something little girl?" Rosie blurted out, "Sir, there is a cat on the bus that used to come to my house every day. I saw him looking out the back window. Is he your cat?"

The bus driver smiled. "Well, he's not exactly mine but he hopped on the bus on Monday, and he's been riding around with me ever since. The kids have been giving him food because we all think he's a stray. Will your parents let you take him home?"

Rosie was worried. What would her mother say? She ran back to the car and said, "Mom, can we bring Frankie home with us?" Mom smiled and said, "Only if he likes pizza."