

# Using DIBELS to Assess Student Literacy

DIBELS is a well-regarded assessment tool (unaffiliated with BJU Press) for measuring early literacy skills and can be very helpful for identifying students' reading needs.

## DIBELS Assessments Overview

DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) is a set of proven assessments designed to measure early literacy skills from kindergarten through eighth grade. These quick, one-on-one assessments are used to

1. screen students for reading difficulties,
2. monitor progress regularly throughout the year,
3. identify instructional needs, and
4. predict future reading success.

## Areas Assessed by DIBELS

(may vary by grade)

- **Phonemic Awareness**—Ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words
- **Alphabetic Principle and Phonics**—Recognizing letter-sound relationships and decoding words
- **Fluency**—Reading with speed, accuracy, and proper expression
- **Vocabulary**—Understanding and using a wide range of words
- **Comprehension**—Understanding and interpreting what is read

## Common DIBELS Subtests

DIBELS 8th Edition includes the following subtests:

- **Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)** (Grades K–1)
  - **Assessment:** Student names letters for 60 seconds.
  - **Materials:** scoring book, form, pen or pencil, clipboard, timer
- **Phonemic Segmentation Fluency (PSF)** (Grades K–1)
  - **Assessment:** Student breaks words into phonemes for 60 seconds.
  - **Materials:** scoring book, form, pen or pencil, clipboard, timer
- **Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)** (Grades K–3)
  - **Assessment:** Student reads or sounds out nonsense words for 60 seconds.

- **Materials:** scoring book, form, pen or pencil, clipboard, timer
- **Word Reading Fluency (WRF)** (Grades K–3)
  - **Assessment:** Student reads sight words for 60 seconds.
  - **Materials:** scoring book, form, pen or pencil, clipboard, timer
- **Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)** (Grades 1–8)
  - **Assessment:** Student reads a passage aloud for 60 seconds.
  - **Materials:** scoring book, form, pen or pencil, clipboard, timer
- **Maze** (Grades 2–8)
  - **Assessment:** Student silently reads a passage for 180 seconds, choosing the best multiple-choice answer for missing words.
  - **Materials:** scoring book, form, pen or pencil, clipboard, timer

## Instructions for Using DIBELS Assessments

1. Print out the Student Progress Monitoring Materials and Scoring Booklets accessed at the link below. Open material by using the latest version of Adobe Acrobat or [Adobe Reader](#).
2. Assess the student in a quiet place free from distractions. Sit so that you can easily observe the student forming words and sounds.
3. Use a clipboard for the scoring sheet so that it is not visible to the student.
4. All subtests but the Maze subtest should be timed for 60 seconds. The Maze subtest has a 3-minute duration.
5. Use the scripted instructions to give the assessment.
6. If a child pauses for more than 3 seconds say, “Keep going!”
7. During the test:
  - Put a ] after the last item that the student completes.
  - Put a / through an item that the student completes incorrectly.
  - Put SC over an item that a student initially misses but self-corrects.
8. Feel free to praise their effort. You may repeat instructions if needed.

9. See p. 53 of the administration booklet linked below for specific directions on each subtest.
10. Use the raw score (the number correct) to track student growth and pinpoint areas of needed growth.

[https://dibels.uoregon.edu/sites/default/files/2024-12/dibels8\\_admin\\_scoring\\_guide.pdf](https://dibels.uoregon.edu/sites/default/files/2024-12/dibels8_admin_scoring_guide.pdf)

## Materials by Grade

**Grade K:** [GK Student Benchmark Materials & Scoring Booklets](#)

**Grade 1 :** [G1 Student Benchmark Materials & Scoring Booklets](#)

**Grade 2 :** [G2 Student Benchmark Materials & Scoring Booklets](#)

**Grade 3 :** [G3 Student Benchmark Materials & Scoring Booklets](#)

**Grade 4 :** [G4 Student Progress Monitoring Materials & Scoring Booklets](#)

**Grade 5 :** [G5 Student Progress Monitoring Materials & Scoring Booklets](#)

**Grade 6 :** [G6 Student Progress Monitoring Materials & Scoring Booklets](#)

**Grade 7 :** [G7 Student Progress Monitoring Materials & Scoring Booklets](#)

**Grade 8 :** [G8 Student Progress Monitoring Materials & Scoring Booklets](#)

AI was used for ideation and planning of this document. All AI-assisted content has been substantially revised by a human.