

The ABC's of Reading Comprehension Strategies for Parents

Why worry about comprehension?

Reading is more than saying the words or getting from the beginning of the book to the end. To be successful readers, children need to be able to comprehend text. Research has shown there are some strategies we can share with children as we read that will help them gain more understanding: Here are some of them, complete with definitions and sample questions that could liven up your reading discussions at home...

A. Making Connections

Readers constantly make connections as they read; connections to their own lives, another book, or real world events. Bringing those connections out and discussing them can lead to more interaction and interest in a text as well as deepen comprehension.

- What does this book remind you of?
- Have you experienced any of the events or situations in this book?
- Can you understand how the character was feeling? Why?
- What do you know about the book's topic?
- Does this book remind you of another book?



B. Visualizing

Readers create pictures in their minds as they read. If they aren't able to, comprehension is lost. Perhaps background knowledge isn't solid enough for the child to understand the text or perhaps he or she needs to reread for understanding. You could have your children make stops while reading aloud to describe the pictures in their minds. They could even draw for you what they see. You could ask them questions...

- What do you picture as you read this paragraph?
- When reading this story did you make pictures in your head?
- How did these pictures help you understand the story better?



C. Questioning

When readers question the text before, during, and after they read, they attend more closely to the text, clarify meaning, make predictions, and focus their attention on what's important. It is critical for readers to understand some of the most interesting questions we have aren't always answered in the story.

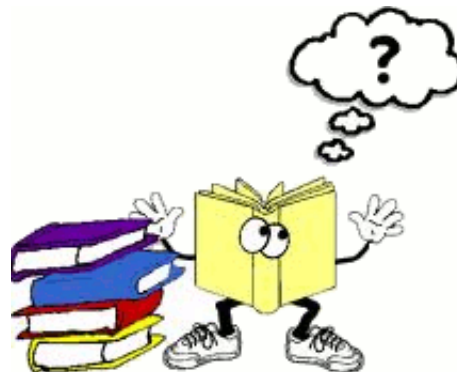
Before Reading

What do you think will happen?

Why do you suppose...

During Reading

What do you think?



What do you wonder?

How come...

What does this word mean? How can I figure out using clues from the text?

After Reading

What would have happened if...

I wonder why the author...

I wonder where we could look to find out more about...

D. Inferring

More than simple prediction, inferring happens when readers can take what they know and what is written in the book to read between the lines. The ability to infer helps the reader get to the why of the story and draw conclusions. You can help your child use inference by asking...

- Why did you think that would happen?
- Why did the author write the story in that way?
- Why do you think the character feels that way?
- Why did the character do that?



E. Determining Importance

Readers need to prioritize as they read. Prioritizing is related to main idea and identifying themes. It is a critical skill for students as they encounter textbooks and nonfiction. Be sure your child pays attention to first and last lines of a paragraph, titles, heading, captions, fonts, illustrations, italics, and boldfaced print. Initiate discussion before reading by asking what your child knows about the topic and what he or she would like to learn.

- What kind of message is the author sending?
- What are the main ideas?
- What is just interesting without being important?

