



# Comprehension

Comprehension is the ability to understand and draw meaning from text. This includes:

- Paying attention to important information
- Interpreting specific meanings in text
- Identifying the main idea
- Verbal responses to questions
- Application of new information gained through reading



## Reading Activities for the Home

- Sequencing errands:** Talk about errands that you will run today. Use sequencing words (sequence, first, next, last, finally, beginning, middle, end) when describing your trip. For example, you might say, “We are going to make three stops. First, we will go to the gas station. Next, we will go to the bank. Finally, we will go to the grocery store.”
- Every day comprehension:** Ask your child who, what, when, where, why, how questions about an event in his/her day. For example, if your child attended a party, you could ask, “Who was there? What did you do? When did you have cake? Where did you go? Why did the invitation have dogs on it? How did the birthday child like the presents?” Once your child is comfortable answering these questions about his/ her experiences, try asking these questions about a book you’ve read together.
- Think aloud:** When you read aloud to your child, talk about what you are thinking. It is your opportunity to show your child that reading is a lot more than just figuring out the words. Describe how you feel about what’s going on in the book, what you think will happen next, or what you thought about a character’s choice.

### READING FICTION

- Before reading:** Point out the title and author. Look at the picture on the cover and ask, “What do you think is going to happen in this story? Why?” This will help your child set a purpose for reading.
- During reading:** Stop every now and then to ask your child to tell you what has happened so far or what he/she predicts will happen. You might also ask for your child’s opinion. “Do you think the character did the right thing? How do you feel about that choice?” Explain any unfamiliar words.
- After reading:** Ask your child to retell the story from the beginning and ask for opinions, too. “What was your favorite part? Would you recommend this to a friend?”

### READING NONFICTION

- Before reading:** Point out the title and author. Look at the picture on the cover and ask, “What do you think you’ll learn about in this book? Why?” This helps your child consider what he already knows about the topic. Look at the table of contents. You and your child may choose to read the book cover to cover or go directly to a certain chapter.



## Reading Activities for the Home

- During reading:** Don't forget the captions, headings, sidebars, or any other information on the page. Young readers tend to overlook these, so it's a good idea to show that the author includes lots of information in these "extras".
- After reading:** Ask your child, "What was it mostly about? What do you still want to know? Where could you find out?"

### OTHER IDEAS

- Before your child reads a story, read the title and look at the cover. Ask, "What do you think will happen in the story?"
- Take a quick "book look" and encourage your child to talk about what he/she thinks about what might happen in the story.
- As your child reads, ask questions that start with who, what, where, when, why and how. If your child does not answer with an appropriate response, redirect by saying, "I think you mean a person because it was a "who" question" then restate the question.
- After you read a few pages, ask "What do you think will happen next?"
- Ask your child to talk about the beginning, middle and end of the story. You will need to model this several times first.
- Discuss words related to stories such as characters, problem and solution. For example, "How did characters of the Three Bears solve the problem of the porridge being too hot?" If the child does not know, show the picture or reread the page.
- After reading, ask your child, "What was your favorite part? Show me. Why do you like that part?"
- Ask questions about character traits. Ex: "Which character do you think was kind? Which character was bossy? How do you know?" If your child doesn't know, give your answer. You may need to do this many times before your child can do it. He/she may also "mimic" your answer. Encourage your child's attempts.
- Encourage deeper thinking by asking, "If the story kept going, what do you think would happen next?"
- Help your child make connections to his/her life experience while reading. You could say, "Is there anything you read in the story that reminds you of something? The boy who went to the zoo with his family reminds me of when we went to the zoo over the summer. What do you think?"
- As you are reading, think out loud to your child. Ask questions such as "I wonder why the boy is crying in the picture? Will he find his lost toy?" This demonstrates that reading and comprehension is an active process, not passive.
- Make puppets to help your child retell a favorite story or use stuffed animals as props to retell a story or part of a favorite story.