

Helping Your Child Understand What They Read

This guide is for parents and caregivers who want to support their child's **reading comprehension** at home. The strategies in this guide work for all readers and are especially helpful for children who struggle to understand or talk about what they read. Children develop reading skills at different rates, and it's okay to need extra time or support.

Reading comprehension is the ability to **understand**, **remember**, and **apply** what you read. Strong comprehension helps children succeed in school and build confidence as learners. You do not need teaching experience to support your child; simple conversations before, during, and after reading can make a big difference. To use this guide, set aside about 30 minutes, choose a book, and follow the steps before, during, and after reading.



? Before You Read: Preview the Text

~5 MINUTES

These short steps help your child know to expect and prepare them to be an active reader.

1 Scan the text.

Look at the text together, and notice the titles, pictures, or anything that stands out.

This picture has such vivid colors!

Let's take a quick look, what do you notice?

This helps your child get an idea of what the text might be about.

2 Define unfamiliar words.

Briefly point out one or two words that look unfamiliar or important.

There's a word that might be new, so let's talk about it before we read!

This can help your child avoid getting stuck when they encounter them in the text.

3 Form connections.

Help your child connect the text to what they already know.

Does this story remind you a book we've read?

What do you think this text might be about?

Making connections helps your child understand and remember what they read.

📖 While You Read: Check-in Along the Way

ONGOING

Pause occasionally to briefly check for understanding. Check-ins can be brief and happen at natural breaks in the text.

1 Identify the main idea.

Ask your child to think about what the paragraph or section was about.

What were the main ideas we read?

How do you know? Can you show me?

This helps your child focus on the most important information.

2 Come up with questions.

Encourage your child to ask or answer questions as they read.

Are you curious about anything we read?

Is there anything you didn't understand?

Questions help keep your child engaged and thinking.

3 Address confusion.

If your child seems unsure or confused, pause and try a simple strategy.

Is there another part that might help us understand this?

Let's go back and read that again.

Catching confusion early helps prevent frustration and builds confidence.

💡 After You Read: Summarize and Review

5-10 MINUTES

End each reading session by briefly talking about what you read. Keep it short and positive; no need to do everything!

1 Get the big picture.

Work with your child to create a short summary of what you read.

Let's explain this chapter in just two sentences.

What was the conflict in this story?

This helps your child focus on the most important ideas.

2 Revisit your predictions.

Look back at any predictions or questions you came up with.

Did we find answers to our questions?

Were our predictions correct? How do we know?

This shows your child how readers use the text to confirm their thinking.

3 Reconnect to the text.

End your reading time by making a personal connection with the story.

What was your favorite part?

Is there anyone you know who might like this book?

These conversations help your child enjoy reading and feel connected to the text.