

Six Reading Comprehension Strategies

Families Can Practice Together At Home

These comprehension strategies work for any kind of text and any age student. Even experienced adult readers use these strategies, often without realizing it! But there's a first time for everything, and young readers can benefit from explicit instruction in these strategies.





ACTIVATING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Sometimes, just asking students questions that lead them to remember familiar stories, or their own experience is an effective intervention strategy to activate background knowledge.

- **FACT:** Understanding others' emotions is a big first step in learning how to make and play with friends. You can help your child notice how others are feeling.
- **TIP:** As you read bedtime books, pause when a character is feeling sad or scared. Ask, "How are they feeling? How can you tell? Have you ever felt that way?"
- **GROWTH:** Keep talking about how others feel! Now when you read about a character who feels sad or scared, ask: "What would you do to help them feel better?"



predicting

In this reading comprehension strategy, students use what they have understood from the story so far to guess what might happen next. When students anticipate the future of a story, they lean on prior knowledge, contextual clues, and understanding of story elements and genre.

- **FACT:** In school, kids begin reading longer books with more details. Making sure they understand what they read is key to helping them thrive.
- **TIP:** At bedtime, check in with your child. Ask, “What are you reading?” Then try, “Tell me about the story so far.” Ask, “What do you think will happen next?”
- **GROWTH:** Keep checking for understanding. Now ask your child to read a page or two of their book to you. Ask, “What did you find interesting about that part?”

Just

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MONITORING COMPREHENSION

By engaging in comprehension monitoring, readers take an active role in their own learning process, becoming aware of any potential gaps or areas of confusion. Parents can foster this skill by modeling it themselves. They can think aloud while reading and ask students questions that encourage self-reflection and self-assessment.

- **FACT:** At this age, kids start to really notice ways they learn best and strategies that work for them. Talking about these discoveries builds study skills.
- **TIP:** After your child finishes an assignment, ask about it. Try, “What went well? What are some of the strategies you used to do this or figure this out? Did you make an outline? Take notes?”
- **GROWTH:** Keep asking about your child’s assignments. After finding out what went well, try, “Was anything challenging? Anything you’d do differently next time?”

ASKING QUESTIONS

One way families can support this strategy at home is to model the process of asking thoughtful questions about the book. This creates an open and inquisitive atmosphere around book-reading. It also shows that reading is an active conversation with the author and the ideas.

Types of questions adults can model and children can ask about the text:

- Clarifying question—e.g. *What is a runt?*
- Connecting question—e.g. *What do Charlotte and Fern Arable have in common?*
- Inferential question—e.g. *Why does Fern want her aunt and uncle to buy Wilbur?*

- **FACT:** Asking your child WHO, WHAT, WHY, and WHERE questions during story time helps them understand books and become a better writer, too.
- **TIP:** As you read a story, ask questions. Point to a picture and say, “WHO is this? WHAT are they doing? WHY are they doing it? WHAT will happen next?”
- **GROWTH:** Now after a story, ask a HOW question to get your child really thinking! Say, “HOW would this story be different if it were in outer space?”

Read a
good tale



Retelling / Summarizing

When children retell a story, they process what happened and put it in their own words. Parents can encourage this strategy by asking their child to retell the main events, characters, and key details of the story.

- **FACT:** In school, kids retell stories. They write about them, talk about them, and act them out. When kids retell stories, it shows they understand stories.
- **TIP:** When your child gets home from school ask, “What book did your teacher read today? What happened in the story? What was your favorite part?”
- **GROWTH:** Keep retelling stories! Now retell a story that YOU loved as a child. Make sure to include lots of details about the setting and characters.



Get lost in a
good book

Reading
gives us
someplace
to go when
we must
stay where
we are



Embracing Storytelling in all its forms

Choosing a voice for each character requires the reader to understand key character traits and plot points. Is this character old or young? Confident or nervous? An evil genius or a helping hero? This strategy leverages the power of creativity and the joy of play to foster comprehension of a story.

- **FACT:** When you give book characters different voices, you help your child learn that each character is different. This helps your child understand stories.
- **TIP:** When reading a book to your child, give each character a different voice. Try high and low voices. Each time the characters speak, use the special voices.
- **GROWTH:** Keep giving characters different voices. Your child can try as they read to you! Ask your child to show you what each character sounds like.

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