

What can I do to help my child develop comprehension skills?

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Comprehension is understanding what you read, as you read it. Good readers don't just say words out loud—they form a picture in their mind of the story, making a mental movie to help them imagine the events as they happen. Readers who are good at comprehending also think beyond the story. They make connections to what they already know, make inferences and predictions, and think about the story after they are done reading. Continuing to read with your child for fun is a great way to build comprehension skills. When you read together or when you listen to your child read, talk about what you're reading, new words they might not know, and what you imagine when you read. Here are some more specific tips to help build comprehension at home.

TIP: Continue to read aloud or read together

- ♥ Pick stories your child will enjoy reading. Visit the library to find new books and get recommendations from the librarian.
- ♥ When reading nonfiction, show your child how to use the headings and subheadings to understand what the text is about and how it is organized.
- ♥ As you read, make connections between what is in the story and experiences your child has had (e.g., "Remember that time you fell off your bike? How did you feel then?").
- ♥ As you read, stop and ask your child what they're thinking about. Share what you are picturing in your mind too. Modeling our own mental movies helps kids to form theirs.
- ♥ Ask questions about the text that have a "right" answer (e.g., "What just happened? Where are they going? Who is this character?"). If your child doesn't know what's going on, go back and reread or pick a simpler text. Make sure your learner knows it's always okay to read something again if they are confused.
- ♥ Start to ask your child questions that are "beyond" the text. Beyond-the-text questions aren't answered directly in the text, but a good reader can figure them out based on clues. This is called making an inference (e.g., "Why does she feel that way? What do you think will happen next? Why did they decide to do that?").
- ♥ Help your child build context for what they are reading by reading other books on related topics. For example, if you are reading a fiction book about characters in space, you might read some nonfiction books about space too! You can also use YouTube and Google to show your learner more about the topics they are reading about.

TIP: Help your child build their vocabulary

- ✦ Often, poor comprehension happens when a learner doesn't know the meaning of the words they are reading. It's important to teach kids to recognize when they don't understand something. If you read a word your child might not understand, take the time to stop and talk about it.
- ✦ Teach your child that too many unknown words can make a text too hard. On a typical page, 1–4 unknown words is probably a good amount, while books with no unfamiliar words might be too easy.
- ✦ Talk about new words as they come up in conversation. Get excited when your child uses the words you talked about.