

Tips On Reading Comprehension

WHAT ARE COMPREHENSION SKILLS?

Comprehension is the process of making meaning from a written text. Typically, children might have difficulty understanding due to limited vocabulary and/or a lack of familiarity with the subject matter. Both these constraints may be remedied by reading more widely and making friends with a good dictionary. Comprehension skills can also be acquired through practice, and here are some interactive reading strategies you can use to guide your child.

THINKING ALOUD: Good readers think while they're reading. They draw on their personal experience and knowledge, language skills and strategies in order to make sense of what they're reading. By thinking aloud for your child as you read along with her (she should have a copy of the passage in front of her) you will be modelling those same reading strategies she should learn to use on her own. You'll be coaching her to recognise what she doesn't understand, identify the difficulty and where it occurs—this is also the mark of a proficient reader.

When she comes across a difficult spot you might suggest that she try to paraphrase the section in her own words; or if a particular word or idiom proves troublesome, encourage her to consult a dictionary. When appropriate, advise her to skip forward in the passage, or refer back, for information that might help her.

ASKING & ANSWERING QUESTIONS: Asking your child questions about the story or passage will help to focus his attention and intellectually engage with it. Questions could be as basic as who, what, where, when, why and how. What is the passage about? Where are these events happening? Why are they happening? Who are the people involved? And so on. You may also want to ask open-ended questions, which require your child to express his personal opinion and draw on his own experiences.

A final tip, with assessment tests and exams in mind. By reading with your child and following the strategies outlined above, you'll be able to identify the types of comprehension passages that challenge him. You can then make a special effort to practise with similar texts and topics.

Coming next month:

Developing your child's motor skills for handwriting



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