

Building Reading Comprehension

How is a good reader like a meteorologist, a filmmaker, and a detective all wrapped up into one? He knows how to make predictions, visualize, and spot clues!

Stepping into fun roles like the ones in this guide can boost your youngster's comprehension and improve his reading skills. Suggest that he try them one at a time—or try a combination—depending on what he's reading and why he's reading it.



Read like a surveyor

Construction teams use surveyors to explore the land before they start a project. When your child has a textbook chapter to read, encourage him to get the “lay of the land” by skimming to preview what it's about.



Activity: To start, your youngster could write a checklist to refer to during his “survey.” Suggest that he put these entries on an over-

sized bookmark (cut from poster board) to remind him what to browse for:

- Chapter title
- Section headings
- Diagrams, photographs, maps, and other graphics
- Captions
- Boldface words
- End-of-chapter or end-of-section questions

Read like a meteorologist

A meteorologist gathers information from the atmosphere to predict the weather. Likewise, good readers collect information from a book to predict what might happen next. Making predictions helps your child monitor how well she understands what she's reading.

Activity: Give your youngster a small notebook for jotting down predictions as she reads. She should also note clues

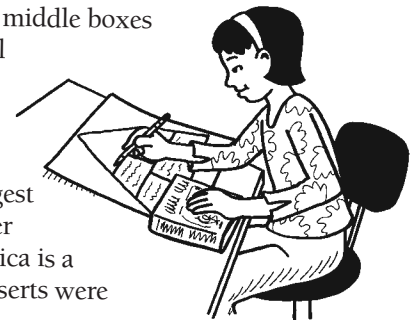
from the text that led to her forecast. For example, if she's reading *Where the Red Fern Grows* (Wilson Rawls), she might write, “I predict something bad will happen. Billy heard two screech owls, and that's a sign of bad luck.” Have her read on to find out if she's right. She can put a check beside each correct prediction.

continued

Think about it

Comprehension improves when readers spend time thinking about a book or chapter after they read it. Here's a simple way your child can reflect on her reading.

1. Have her draw a pyramid with five sections: three in the bottom row, two in the middle, and one at the top.
2. In each of the bottom three boxes, she should write a new fact she learned while reading. For instance, after reading about deserts, she might write, “One-fifth of the earth is covered in desert.”
3. She can fill the two middle boxes with questions she still has. (“How cold does it get in the desert at night?”)
4. In the top box, suggest that she write about her favorite part. (“Antarctica is a desert. I thought all deserts were hot during the day!”)



Read like a filmmaker

Before a movie is filmed, the filmmaker has to read the script and imagine what scenes will look like. As your child reads, suggest that he pause from time to time to visualize details and play a “movie” in his head. He will understand the book better and remember more of what he reads.

Activity: Have your youngster make a storyboard, or a series of drawings, based on a book. He should draw lines to divide several sheets of paper into four boxes each. As he reads, encourage him to draw a picture in each box. For instance, if he’s reading a science chapter about solar eclipses, he could draw each stage of an eclipse in a different box and write a caption describing it.



Read like an archaeologist

To uncover the past, an archaeologist works slowly and in stages—first with big shovels, then smaller ones, and finally with brushes. When your child reads closely, she should “dig” into the text multiple times and find new details to think about each time.

Activity: Suggest that your youngster read a textbook chapter in three stages. Say she’s reading a social studies chapter on the woman suffrage movement. For a first pass, she can simply read it all the way through.

On the next round, she should read one paragraph at a time and add a sticky note by it stating its purpose (introduces, describes, explains, compares). For instance, one paragraph might *introduce* Susan B. Anthony, and the next might *describe* her accomplishments. During the last read-through, she should add details to each note. (“Susan B. Anthony was a leader in the movement for women to vote.”)

Read like a detective

A detective combines new evidence with past experiences to solve a mystery. Similarly, readers can spot clues and make connections between what they read and what they already know. This helps them relate to—and takes the mystery out of—a book.

Activity: Listen to an audiobook together so your child can practice making connections out loud. When the story reminds her of something (a book she read previously, a place she has visited, a person she knows), she can pause to share her connection. *Example:* “This part about Percy Jackson visiting Olympus reminds me of when I saw ancient Greek statues at the museum.” How many connections can you both make to the story?



Make a long story short

When your youngster summarizes something he has read, watched, or experienced, he focuses on the most important ideas—a skill that can boost reading comprehension. Encourage him to practice with these ideas:

- Suggest that he keep a journal where he sums up each day as a newspaper headline. (“Boy defeats history exam with all-time high score!”)
- Play story charades. Take turns silently acting out key scenes from familiar tales for the other person to guess.
- Have your child use 20 words or fewer to describe a book for you to guess. (“A pig makes friends with a spider, and the spider saves the pig’s life.”) After you answer (*Charlotte’s Web*), give him a book to name.

