Reading Comprehension

WHAT CAN WE DO AT HOME?

Reading comprehension is the ability to read a sentence and understand its meaning. It is the ability to look at written words and process the meaning or ideas behind them. Reading comprehension isn’t just understanding a single word or its meaning—it is the ability to recognize words, sentences, and paragraphs and make sense of the overall meaning.

41% of parents say that their children do not enjoy reading. That’s a lot of kids! And when kids don’t like reading, they are less likely to put the time in to improve. This leads to a cycle of poor reading skills, lowered comprehension, more frustration—and even less love for reading.

So how can we help our children become better readers?

Here are some reading strategies for struggling readers that help boost comprehension and reading motivation and are a great place to start!

Find books they’ll like- Sometimes, low reading comprehension comes down to the fact that a student just isn’t interested in what he or she is reading.

Read aloud- Hearing the words out loud helps many students gain a better understanding of what they are reading than they are able to get while reading in their head.

Skim the headings of the text- Quickly skimming the headings of a book gives students a high-level overview of what they are reading. Your child can use the headings to quickly understand what the reading is about and the main points before he or she actually starts reading.

Re-read sections that are confusing- Revisiting the parts that were confusing for your child can help your child gain a more complete picture of what he or she is learning.

Use a ruler or finger to follow along- This trick can also help students who have dyslexia and struggle with separating lines of text and sentences while reading.

Write down words you don’t know- Encourage your child to look these words up in a dictionary to learn what they mean. Then, find ways to use them in a sentence that your child makes up him or herself.

Discuss what your child has just read- When your child has finished reading, talk about what he or she just read together. Ask your child what he or she learned and his or her thoughts.

Recap and summarize the main points- When talking about the material with your child, ask him or her to recap and summarize the main points. Explaining what your child learned in his or her own words helps ensure your child understands what was read. It also helps relate the material to what he or she already knows.

Write down questions about what you don’t understand- When your child has a question, encourage him or her to pause and reflect on what he or she has read.

Source: “How to Improve Reading Comprehension for Kids”, Oxford Learning Centres, Inc.

5 Minute Games -

Word Circle:

- Use magnetic/cut out letters to make a word.
- Change one letter each time to make a new word until you get back to the original (e.g. park-part-tart-dark-park).

Truck Stories:

As you are driving, point out a semi-truck and create a story. “Where do you think that truck is going?” “What do you think is inside the truck?” Make up a story together about the journey of the truck, each telling a sentence at a time.
PHONICS “BUZZ” WORDS—DECODED!

Phonics: using the sounds made by individual letters and groups of letters to read words.

Decoding: using your phonic knowledge to sound out and read words.

Grapheme: a written letter or group of letters, like ‘s’, ‘a’, ‘she’ or ‘air’. Some graphemes are single letters like ‘a’; others are digraphs like ‘ai’.

Digraph: two letters that make one sound together, like ‘sh’, ‘ai’, ‘oo’.

Phoneme: the sound a letter or group of letters make – e.g. the word ‘mat’ has three phonemes, ‘m’, ‘a’ and ‘t’. The word ‘through’ is longer, but it also has three phonemes, ‘th’, ‘r’ and the ‘oo’ sound in ‘ough’.

Sounding out: using your phonic knowledge to help you say each sound within a word, e.g. ‘r-e-d’ or ‘s-au-ce-p-a-n’.

Blending: running the sounds in the word together to read the whole word, e.g. ‘r-e-d, red’, ‘s-au-ce-p-a-n, saucepan’.

High-frequency words (also known as ‘sight’ words): the very important, very common words which we use a lot, but which aren’t always decodable using phonics. This includes crucial words like ‘the’, ‘one’, ‘where’, etc. Children are taught to recognize these words on sight – a few of these words are introduced and learned at a time.

Source: “How to Teach Your Child

HOW TO FIND THE “JUST RIGHT” BOOK FOR MY CHILD

Kids need to read books that they can both decode (read the words) and comprehend (understand the meaning). Teachers call this a “just right” book, or a book that is at the child’s instructional level. A just right book at a child’s instructional level is a book that stretches the child just a bit — not so much as to make him frustrated but enough to continue his growth as a reader. This child would make an error on about one word out of twenty. You can help your child do the Five Finger Test to figure out if the book is just right.

The Five Finger Test

1. When your child finds a book he wants to read, have him flip to a page in the middle of the book. (One with the same amount of text as the other pages.)
2. Ask your child to read the page — out loud so you can help.
3. From a closed fist, hold up a finger each time your child misses a word. She can do this on her own eventually.
4. No fingers means that the book is an independent level — it’s easy for her to read and perfectly fine for part of her reading diet. One to five fingers means the book is at an instructional level — BINGO! — just right for her to grow as a reader. Five or more fingers means the book is at a challenge or frustration level and not recommended because the child won’t be able to comprehend the text.


RESOURCES

*“Level It Books” - This app helps you find a “good fit” book at your child’s reading level.

*Non-Fiction for Kids—Reading Rockets has some great tips and tricks for integrating more non-fiction and information text into your reading routines.

https://www.readingrockets.org/books/nonfiction-for-kids

*PBS Kids— fun reading games and videos! https://pbskids.org/games/reading/

COMMON READING QUESTIONS:

Q: My child does not have confidence when reading, becomes easily frustrated, struggles with new books, and does not enjoy reading. What can I do to help?

A: Beginning readers need lots of practice reading – it takes time, practice, time, and more practice! Work with your child’s teacher to learn exactly at what level he/she is reading. Then, go to the library and load up on books written at that level AND below. Provide him/her with time each day to read, reread, and reread again those below-level reading level books.

You’ll want to build up his/her confidence and fluency with those books. Praise his/her efforts and reread each book multiple times over the course of a week or two. Finally, get some terrific children’s literature written ABOVE his/her reading level. Read those books to your child to remind him/her WHY reading is so great. Model lots of good expression and let your child hear what good, fluent reading sounds like. Do everything you can to provide a fun climate for reading. If a book is too hard, put it away. Reinforce his/her efforts and continue to work closely with your school and teachers. If he/she continues to struggle, talk with them about additional testing and some supervised tutoring.