

How will I know if my child understands what he/she is reading?

You'll be able to tell that your child understands what he/she is reading if he/she laughs at funny parts of the book, talks spontaneously about the story, or makes connections to his/her own life. Natural hints like this give you an idea about whether your child is really understanding the text. On the other hand, if your child pauses, skips punctuation, or substitutes words that don't make sense, he/she might not be understanding the story.

The best way to tell if your child is understanding the text is by **talking about it!** You don't need to ask any specific questions (but we'll list some helpful ones here anyway). Just have a conversation with your child about the text. Try starting with "What did you think about that book?" Making time for children to talk about their reading is essential to their reading development (Johnson and Keier 2010).

Questions to ask before, during and after reading: **Before**

- Why did you choose this book?
- What do you think it will be about?
- Do you know anything about this topic already?
- What questions do you have about the book before you start reading?

During

- What do you think will happen next?
- What would you have done in that situation?
- What is the character feeling? How can you tell?

After

- What were the most important parts of this book?
- Why do you think the author wrote this story?
- If there were a sequel, what do you think it would be about?

Resources:



**Book Lists, Reading & Communication Logs
in your child's Pupil Passport**

More questions to ask your child:

<http://www.thelinksprimary.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/KS2-Reading-questions-for-parents-1.pdf>

Reading at home:

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/advice-for-parents/reading-at-home/>

National Literacy Trust website for parents:

<http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk>

National Curriculum for English including reading:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study>

Top ten tips for encouraging reading for pleasure:

<https://www.pearson.com/uk/learners/primary-parents/learn-at-home/help-your-child-to-enjoy-reading/top-10-tips-to-help-children-enjoy-reading.html>

Essex Libraries website with links to events, audiobook downloads, and more:

<http://libraries.essex.gov.uk/>

Barnes Farm Juniors essential characteristics for reading:

<https://www.barnesfarmjuniors.co.uk/website/reading/32978>

Accelerated Reader Book Quizzes for home

<http://takethequiz.co.uk/>

References:

Clay, Marie M. 2005. *Literacy Lessons: Designed for Individuals, Part I: Why? When? And How?* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Johnson, Pat and Keier, Katie. 2010. *Catching Readers Before They Fall: Supporting Readers Who Struggle, K-4.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse.



Reading Comprehension: How can I help my child to better understand what he/she is reading?



What's inside?

- Supporting research and evidence
- How to help your child choose a "Just Right" book
- Questions to ask before, during and after reading
- How to help your child decode challenging words
- Resources to support your child's reading development

How Reading Works

A **reading process system** is made up of more than a dozen strategies. The reading process system is like an orchestra. All the instruments blend to form a beautiful composition. Likewise, a reader will use many reading strategies at once to make meaning from a text. As a person reads, she might **predict** what will happen next, **visualise** the setting, and **infer** (guess) what the character is feeling. These are only a few of the processes that readers integrate into their reading process systems. This is all done in the reader's head; the reading process system is invisible. Sometimes, children who struggle with reading comprehension (or have not yet developed a reading process system) think that reading is just calling out word after word correctly. However, reading is much more than this. **First and foremost, reading is about making meaning.** (Johnson and Keier 2010)

We want to develop readers who:

- Check on themselves and think about what they are reading
- Notice when their reading doesn't sound right, look right or make sense
- Stop when something they've read doesn't seem right...and take steps to fix this
- Use a variety of strategies to fix their errors or make meaning

In order to practise using his/her reading processes, your child needs lots of time to read books that are *just right*. Research shows that children need to read often from books that are easy for them to "go it alone" so they can spend less time decoding new words and more time practicing their comprehension strategies (Clay 2005). The system becomes stronger the more it is put to use. For this reason, we provide the children with ample opportunities to read and listen to reading at school and we hope that you will do the same at home. **Children of all ages need to spend time reading aloud, reading in their heads and listening to expert readers.**

How can I help my child choose a book that's right for him/her?

We ask children to **PICK** the right book by asking themselves:

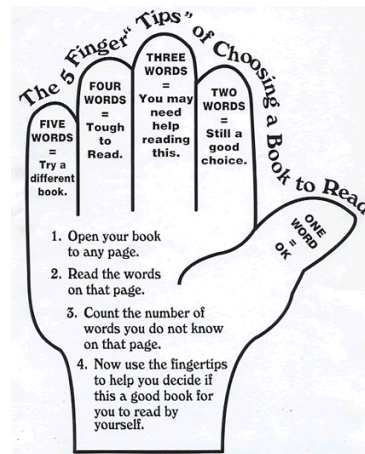
Purpose- Why do I want to read this book?

Interest- Does this topic interest me?

Comprehend- Do I understand it?

Know- Do I know most of the words?

Children can use the **Five Finger Rule** to work out if they know most of the words.



We want children to read books that are easy for them to read independently, but are not so easy that the child gets bored. One or two unknown words on a page is usually *just right*.

Remember: If there is a book your child wants to read but can't access independently yet, you can always read it to him/her, read it together, or save it for later! **Audiobooks** are also a great option, and allow children to join discussions about books they may not have been able to read otherwise.

Although the books in our school are labelled with coloured bands to guide children toward *just right* books, we also want the children to be able to make informed choices about what they're interested in and able to read. We don't want to hear a child describe himself as "a Topaz reader" or "an Emerald reader." We hope that child will instead look at the types of things he likes to read and describe himself as "a reader who enjoys historical fiction, biographies, and Anne Fine books!" Being able to describe what they like and dislike about books is a great indicator of a child's comprehension!

What should I do when my child gets stuck on a word?

When a child comes to a word he/she doesn't know, we don't want our first response to be "Sound it out." We do want children to use their knowledge of letters and sounds, but we want them to do that in combination with their understanding of the text. We want the children to think not just about how the word sounds, but also about whether it looks right, sounds right in the sentence, and makes sense. You might prompt your child by saying, "Hmm, what word would make sense there?" or asking her/him to go back and read the sentence again, keeping the meaning in her/his head. Here are some strategies your child uses in the classroom to help decode unknown words:



Check the picture or diagram on the page



Think about what has happened in the text so far



Go back and read the sentence again



Check the first letter of the word



Look for chunks or parts of the word that you already know



Ask yourself: Does it look like the right word? Does it sound right in the sentence? Does it make sense in the story?



Reread to check and confirm

If your child still can't decode the word independently, or starts to become frustrated, just explain the word. In that case, don't worry about the prompting or questioning. **What we want most of all is for your child to have an enjoyable experience reading with you at home.**