

Helping Your Child Build Comprehension

Getting Ready to Read

There are many pieces in the reading puzzle. Phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding, fluency, and vocabulary—the components of reading—all work together to help your child understand what he reads. He needs phonemic awareness skills in order to be able to decode words. He needs to be able to decode words accurately and know what they mean. And he needs to be able to read fluently. Your child uses all of these skills when he reads.



about what he already knows about birds. Ask questions and add any additional information you can to help him. You can also ask him what he wants to learn from reading the book.

Another way to help your child get ready to read is by talking about new words he might come across. For example, he might be interested in the bald eagle. Talk about what the word “bald” means. Does it mean the same thing for a bird as it does for a person? Or, perhaps your child already knows the word “claw,” but the book may use a different word, like “talon,” to describe a bird’s claws.

When children don’t understand what they read, they might say something like, “I hate reading!” or “This is stupid!” A child who doesn’t enjoy reading may be struggling to understand what he reads. When we don’t understand something, it’s hard to enjoy it or remember it!

Before your child reads a story or a book, ask him what he thinks the story will be about. Read the title together and look at the pictures on the cover and in the story. Ask your child to make some predictions about what might take place in the story. Why does he think these things might happen?

Comprehension is more than just reading words and recalling facts. Everything your child already knows affects how he understands what he reads. Having background knowledge helps your child get involved in what he’s reading. He uses what he already knows to understand new information. Comprehension is more than just a skill—it’s a process for learning.

Helping your child make connections to the text will help get him excited about what he is about to read. Helping him get over potential stumbling blocks, like new vocabulary words, will help him have a successful experience. Being involved and interested in the story before he even starts to read it will improve his comprehension!

To help your child understand what he reads, get him ready to read. Talk about what he’s going to read before he starts. For example, if your child has chosen to read a book about birds, talk to him



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