

# Helping Your Child Build Comprehension

## Understanding While We Read



We read for many reasons. We read for fun. We read to learn new facts and discover new ideas. We read to learn how to do something, and we read to know what's going on in the world. No matter why we read, we want to understand what we read.

Reading is a skill that needs to be practiced. Just as your child would have to practice a musical instrument or shoot hoops over and over again to improve, she needs to read to get better at it.

The more your child reads, the more she will build her background knowledge. This means knowing about people, places, nature, and how things work. Building background knowledge is important to your child's reading success. Can you imagine reading a book about a subject you don't know anything about? Reading about medical research is easy for a doctor, but not so easy for a person who hasn't studied medicine.

There are several ways you can help your child become a successful independent reader. While your child is reading, she can increase her vocabulary and background knowledge with a little help from you. Guiding her reading when you read with her will help your child learn to do these same kinds of things when you aren't there.

When you read together, stop and help your child figure out the meanings of new words. Look at the words and sentences that come before and after the new word. Does the situation in the story offer any clues? Is there another word that would make sense? And, of course, you can always help her look up new words in the dictionary!

Talk about the characters in the story as you read. Discuss the problems the characters are facing and how those problems are solved. Can your child think of another way that a problem could be solved? What advice would she give to the characters in the story? What would she do if she were in the same situation?

As you read together, monitor what your child understands about the story. Does she understand what is happening? Does she know why the characters act the way they do, or why they make particular choices? Talk about any parts of the story your child is wondering about.

Your child is processing a lot of information as she reads. You can help her get the most out of her reading experience by expanding her background knowledge and vocabulary while she reads.



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