

Helping Your Child Build Comprehension

I'm Finished. Now What?

How do you know if your child has understood what he has read? Comprehension is not just recalling information from something we've read. It's about understanding a story and making connections to what we know and think.

If your child understands what he has read, he should be able to tell you about a story's main events and important details. Listen for him to describe the characters, the time and place of the story, the sequence of events, and problems the characters faced.

Your child doesn't need to remember every detail in the story, but there are five words that can help you ask good questions if he is having trouble knowing what to say. Asking questions that begin with **who**, **what**, **where**, **when**, and **why** should help your child get to the main points of the story.

Help your child make connections between what he has read and similar experiences from his own life, or experiences he has seen in a movie or read in another book. You might ask, "How do you think that character felt when that happened?" or "What can we learn from this book?"

Ask questions that require your child to think about what he has read, such as:



- What would happen if...?
- What is your opinion of...?
- What is the best solution to...?
- What is the difference between...?

These types of questions will help your child compare what he knows and thinks to what happens in the story. This will help him better understand what he has read.

Another way to help your child think about what he has read is to ask him to picture the story in his mind. Readers visualize what they understand. Ask him to draw a picture—in his mind or on paper—of a character, the place where the story happened, or a problem from the story. Then, ask him why that character or setting was important, or what the outcome or solution to the problem was. And be sure to ask him what his favorite part of the story was!

Make reading with your child part of your everyday routine. Talking about what your child is reading, with you or on his own, will help him develop into a great reader who understands more than just words.



This information was produced by the National Center for Family Literacy for use on www.thinkfinity.org, a powerful educational platform supported by the Verizon Foundation. This information may be reproduced for noncommercial purposes without permission.

Copyright © 2008 by the National Center for Family Literacy. Produced by the National Center for Family Literacy, 325 West Main Street, Suite 300, Louisville, KY, 40202-4237.

