

Reading for Success

Read for test success



Tests are an important part of your child's education, and research shows that your child is much more likely to succeed on tests if you are actively involved in developing your child's reading skills. You don't need to be a professional reading teacher to help your child. There are simple things you can do at home to boost those all-important skills.

Reading for fun counts

Results from a nationwide study of fourth graders showed that:

- » Students who read for fun *daily* scored higher than classmates who read less often.
- » Students who *never or hardly ever* read for fun made the lowest scores.
- » Students who had a variety of *reading materials in the home* had higher reading scores than others.

Practice reading for meaning

One of the most important skills for your child to learn is how to read for meaning. This is especially important on tests. Students don't just have to read test instructions—they need to understand them! Here's how you can help:

- » Read an interesting article together and take turns asking each other questions:
 - What are the main points?
 - What did you learn from the article?
 - What surprised you?
 - Does the writer have a strong opinion?
 - Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- » Have your child:
 - Reread the article to find answers.
 - Look up unfamiliar words.

Your child can also practice looking for key information on food labels, classified ads, kit instructions, etc.

Boost testing confidence

Many students find standardized tests of reading comprehension difficult and intimidating. You can help your child become more confident and successful if you share these simple strategies:

- » Read the questions first to anticipate what to look for as you read the passage.
- » Underline parts of the passage you think are important.
- » Practice by creating sample reading comprehension tests. Be sure to make the passages you choose look just like the ones you're likely to encounter on the actual test.

Look for key ideas

When your child is reading and studying for tests, you should encourage him to:

- » Ask questions: What's the main idea in this paragraph?
This page?
This chapter?
- » Look for important information and jot down key ideas. Note-taking is an important study skill to learn.



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Reading comprehension

Long after children can sound out all the words on the page, they may still have problems understanding what they read. Here are some steps you can follow to help your child read a story or an assignment in a textbook:

Prepare for reading assignments

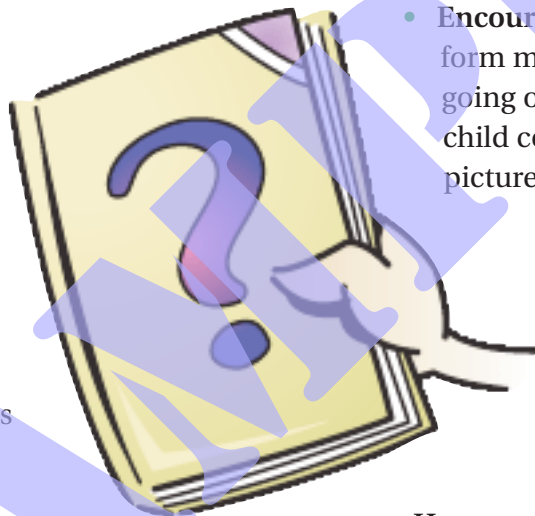
- 1. Get ready.** Before reading, your child should take a few minutes to look through the story or the chapter. Ask your child some questions. "What do you think this reading will be about?" Have your child look at the pictures, if there are any. What ideas does your child have after looking at these pictures?
- 2. Scan the reading** quickly. Your child should see if there are any words that may be hard to understand. Your child should look up new words in the glossary or in a dictionary.
- 3. Take a look** at the questions at the end of the story or chapter, if there are any. They will help guide your child's reading.
- 4. Read the story or chapter.** Your child might read it silently, then later read it aloud to you.
- 5. Ask some questions** about the reading. See if your child can tell you the main idea of the reading.
- 6. Ask your child to read the questions** at the end of the selection aloud. Then have your child restate each question.

7. Ask your child to answer a question.

If your child can't, pick out **one or two** key words in the question. Have your child look back through the reading to find the place in the text that includes those words.

Think while reading

- **Encourage your child to form mental images** of what's going on in the story. Or your child could actually draw the pictures at first.
- **Ask your child,** "Can you name at least one thing in the material that reminds you of something you already know?"



- **Have your child tell**

you the most important parts of the story or text. What is the main idea? If it's a short story or a novel, who are the main characters? What conflicts do the characters face?

- **Practice critical thinking.** Ask for your child's thoughts about the material. Does it make sense? Should the author have presented it in a different way? Did characters in the novel make good choices?

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Help your struggling reader

If your child is one of millions of American youngsters with reading difficulties, don't panic. There are many things you can do to help. Have your child assessed by a pediatrician to rule out vision and hearing problems and by the school to determine the level of difficulty. Discuss with the teacher some ways you can help your struggling reader at home. Here are some ideas:

Set the stage

- **Get your child a library card** and lots of opportunities to use it. If your child is in charge of selecting books, that might be enough incentive for *wanting* to practice reading!
- **Give your child access** to interesting books. Look at your child's bookshelf. If it's been a long time since you've updated it, take a trip to the bookstore.
- **Look for books** that match your child's interests. Try a nonfiction book. Information books answer questions. They also help improve vocabulary.



challenging. (If it's too hard, your child may give up and stop trying.)

- **Stop occasionally to discuss the story.** Struggling readers often have trouble with comprehension, a very important reading skill. Talk about what the characters are doing and why. Ask "what if" questions.
- **Let your child listen** to recorded stories while following along in the book. Many children with reading difficulties read too slowly for stories to make sense, and so they get frustrated. Can't find audio versions of favorite books? Consider recording your own.

Stay involved

- **Offer comfortable guided reading.** Help your child review *sight* words. Build confidence by rereading familiar books together.
- **Let your child imitate your reading.** Choose an easier book. Read a few pages aloud to your child. Then take turns reading the same pages aloud. Finally, have your child read the pages to you. Offer help if your child gets stuck.
- **Remember that practice makes perfect.** Read together frequently. Make sure that what you read together isn't too

Be supportive

- **Do what you can** to make your home a reading- and writing-rich environment, but don't hesitate to ask for help.
- **Work closely with the teacher** to monitor your child's progress. Discuss changes she sees in your child's reading performance. Celebrate small successes.
- **Give positive feedback.** Don't compare your child's reading with that of more successful readers. Don't discuss reading difficulties in front of family members or friends. Deal with reading difficulties in private and with your child's teacher.