

The Seven Keys to Comprehension

Good readers use the following 7 keys to unlock meaning:

1. Create mental images: Good readers create a wide range of visual, auditory, and other sensory images as they read, and they become emotionally involved with what they read.

How to help your child use this strategy:

- As you read, ask your child to describe what he or she is picturing.
- Have your child draw a picture of what he/she saw in his/her mind.

2. Use background knowledge: Good readers use their relevant prior knowledge before, during, and after reading to enhance their understanding of what they're reading. We also call this strategy, *making connections*.

How to help your child use this strategy:

As you read, ask your child...

- "What does this part of the story remind you of?"
- "Does this book remind you of another book?"

3. Ask questions: Good readers generate questions before, during, and after reading to clarify meaning, make predictions, and focus their attention on what's important.

How to help your child use this strategy:

- Model questioning in your own reading.
- Ask, "I wonder" questions
- Ask your child to come up with questions before reading to see if they are answered in the text.
- Keep track of questions on sticky notes.
- Discuss questions you still have after reading

4. Make inferences: Good readers use their prior knowledge and information from what they read to make predictions, seek answers to questions, draw conclusions, and create interpretations that deepen their understanding of the text.

How to help your child use this strategy:

As you read, ask your child...

- "How did you know that?"
- "Why do you think that would happen?"
- "Look at the cover and make predictions."
- "What do you think this story is about?"
- "How do you think the character feels?"

5. Determine the most important ideas or themes: Good readers identify key ideas or themes as they read, and they can distinguish between important and unimportant information.

To help your child determine importance while reading:

- Before reading, ask your child what he/she knows about the topic and what he/she would like to learn.
- After reading, discuss what he/she learned.
- Pay attention to titles, headings, captions, illustrations, bold face and charts
- Decide whether an event is important or unimportant to the story and ask why.

6. Synthesize information: Good readers track their thinking as it evolves during reading, to get the overall meaning.

To help your child synthesize, ask...

- "How has your thinking changed?"
- "What is this story mostly about?"

7. Use fix-up strategies: Good readers are aware of when they understand and when they don't. If they have trouble understanding specific words, phrases, or longer passages, they use a wide range of problem-solving strategies including skipping ahead, rereading, asking questions, using a dictionary, and reading the passage aloud.

How to help your child use this strategy:

Encourage your child to ask himself, as he/she reads...

- "Does this make sense?"
- "Did that sound right?"
- "Does the word that I just said, look like the word that is on the page?"
- "Did the movie that I'm making in my mind while I read, just break down?"

From the book, The Seven Keys to Comprehension, by Susan Zimmermann and Chryse Hutchins