

COMPREHENSION BOOSTERS

Strong readers visualize story events, predict what might happen next, and draw conclusions based on what they've read. They also use their own experiences to understand stories. Try the following activities to build comprehension skills that can help your child become a better reader.



DRAW A CONCLUSION

In this guessing game, your youngster will use your hints to draw conclusions. Have her read a book such as *An Egg Is Quiet* by Dianna Hutts Aston.

Then, secretly pick a character or an object (say, a sea turtle egg) from the book, and give your child a hint ("I'm thinking of one of the eggs") and see if she can tell which one you chose by asking yes-or-no questions. *Examples:*

"Does it have spots?" "Is it a bird egg?" She can use the pictures or words in the book to think of questions. When she figures out your secret, let her choose one for you to guess.



MAKE AN INFERENCE

Here's a fun way to give your youngster practice figuring out something that isn't said directly. It will help him when he needs to read "between the lines." Tell him you're pretending to be a book character who is talking on the phone. You might pick Nate from *Nate the Great* (Marjorie Weinman Sharmat). It's his job to listen and then tell you what the other person could have been saying. For example, you could say, "Hi, Rosamond.... Oh, no! Have you looked under the bed? ... Try setting out a bowl of milk. If that doesn't work, call me back." Your child might infer that Rosamond's cat is missing and she wants Nate to help her find it. Then, trade roles and let him "talk" on the phone while you infer what his conversation is about.

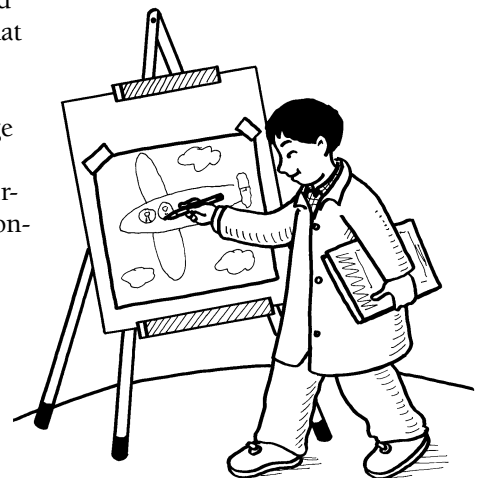
PREDICT WHAT HAPPENS

The goal of this game is to make predictions while reading. Have your youngster write, "Aha!" on a plastic bottle cap. Take turns reading from a book that she isn't familiar with. When

she thinks she knows what will happen next, she shouts "Aha!" and makes a prediction. If you're reading *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* (Doreen Cronin), she might say, "Aha! I think Farmer Brown will be mad when he reads the note from the cows." Next, she passes the cap to you, and it's your turn to predict. After each pass, read to find out if the prediction was correct. Keep reading, predicting, and passing the bottle cap until the story ends.

SHARE A CONNECTION

When your child reads something that reminds him of his life, he can use his personal knowledge to understand the book better. Encourage him to make connections with this activity. Together, read a book. Then, each of you should draw pictures of something the book reminded you of. For example, if you read *The Wright Brothers* (Elizabeth MacLeod), your youngster might draw himself flying in an airplane to his grandmother's house. When you're both finished, share your drawings and explain your connections to the book.



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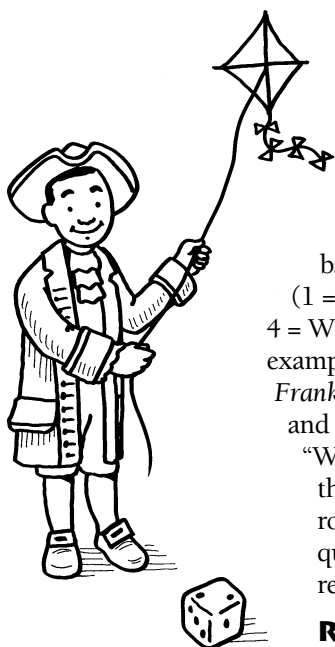
PUT THE STORY IN SEQUENCE

Strong reading comprehension skills can help your youngster put story events in a logical order. Have her practice by reading a book and then writing or drawing five events on separate index cards. For example, if she read *Caps for Sale* (Esphyr Slobodkina), her cards might include the peddler walking with the caps on his head, the peddler stopping to take a nap, and the peddler waking up to find that the monkeys had stolen his caps. Mix up the index cards, and have your child put them back in the right order.

USE QUESTIONS

Asking and answering questions while reading is a great way for your youngster to think carefully about the material. When you read a story together, stop at the end of each page or chapter, and have your child roll a die. Ask him a specific type of question based on the number he rolls.

(1 = Who? 2 = What? 3 = Where? 4 = Why? 5 = When? 6 = How?) For example, if you read *Who Was Ben Franklin?* (Dennis Brindell Fradin) and he rolls a 2, you might ask, “What did Franklin invent?” After the next page or chapter, you can roll the die and let him ask you a question. Take turns rolling and reading until you finish the book.



RETELL A STORY

Retelling a story can help your youngster decide which details matter most. Use stuffed animals to encourage him to practice retelling his favorite tales.

First, read a book together. Afterward, let him tell the story in his own words by making his animals act out the characters’ roles. If you read *Tawny Scrawny Lion* (Kathryn Jackson), he could make a stuffed lion chase his other stuffed animals.

CAN YOU IMAGINE?

A good reader uses her imagination to picture characters and story events in her mind. Here are fun ways for your child to practice visualizing as she reads.

USE YOUR SENSES

Encourage your youngster to use all her senses with this activity. Read a storybook aloud, and ask her to describe what she sees, hears, smells, tastes, or feels. For example, if you read *Fritz and the Beautiful Horses* (Jan Brett), she might describe how she “sees” the horses’ shiny coats, “hears” the “clomp clomp” of their hooves, and “feels” the softness of Fritz’s mane.



IMAGINE WITH ADJECTIVES

Your child can use adjectives, or descriptive words, to help him visualize details. Together, find words in a story that describe people, places, or things. Say you’re reading *The Very Best Pumpkin* (Mark Kimball Moulton)—he might spot “juicy,” “crisp,” and “plump.” Have him choose one of the words to print at the top of a sheet of paper. He can fill the page with pictures cut from old magazines or catalogs that go with the word. For example, if he picks “juicy,” he might include photos of strawberries and peaches.

DESIGN A COVER

Read a story to your youngster without showing her the cover. Then, have her pretend to be the illustrator and draw a cover that captures the main idea of the story. For example, if you read *The 100th Day of School* (Angela Shelf Medearis), she might draw a classroom with a calendar on the wall and write “100” on one of the squares. Then, show her the real cover and have her compare it with her creation.