

## Six Ways to Improve Reading Comprehension

Help your child retain what he reads — a crucial skill, especially as he gets older and needs to glean important information from textbooks.

1. **Have him read aloud.** This forces him to go slower, which gives him more time to process what he reads. Plus, he's not only seeing the words, he's hearing them, too. You can also take turns reading aloud.
2. **Provide the right kinds of books.** Make sure your child gets lots of practice reading books that aren't too hard. She should recognize at least 90 percent of the words without any help. Stopping any more often than that to figure out a word makes it tough for her to focus on the overall meaning of the story.
3. **Reread to build fluency.** To gain meaning from text, your child needs to read quickly and smoothly - a skill known as fluency. By the end of 2nd grade, for example, your child should be able to read 90 words a minute. Rereading familiar, simple books gives your child practice at decoding words quickly, so she'll become more fluent.
4. **Talk to the teacher.** If your child is struggling mightily with comprehension, he may need more help with his reading — for example, building his vocabulary or practicing phonics skills.
5. **Supplement class reading.** If your child's class is studying a particular theme, look for easy-to-read books or magazines on the topic. Some prior knowledge will help her make her way through tougher classroom texts.
6. **Talk about what he's reading.** This "verbal processing" helps him remember and think through the themes of the book. Ask questions before, during, and after a reading session. For example:

*Before:* "What are you interested in about this book? What doesn't interest you?"

*During:* "What's going on in the book? Is it turning out the way you thought it would? What do you think will happen next?"

*After:* "Can you summarize the book? What did you like about it? What other books does it remind you of?"