

Helping Your Child with Reading Comprehension

Tasks set for homework

Although the children in Year 3 are good readers, we feel that they need more experience and skill in responding to analytical and thought-provoking questions. We have outlined some “tips” of how you could help your child, whilst they are reading and completing comprehension homework.

General Reading:

- They should read a range of good quality texts (including the newspaper and non-fiction texts). See our suggested reading list for ideas.
- They should be reading regularly and a good amount each time (1-3 pages is not enough).

Comprehension: Types of Questions:

Retrieval of information

Example question: What was Matthew’s mum making for dinner?

Answer: Cottage pie and peas.

Inference

Example question: How does Matthew feel about eating cottage pie and peas? How do you know?

Answer: He loves cottage pie and peas. We know this because he grins from ear to ear when his mum tells him that is what she is making for dinner.

Deduction

Example question: What do you think Matthew might do next? Explain why you think this.

Answer: There could be several answers to this, but the person marking the text would be looking for the child to have thought about what Matthew might do, based on what they have read. For example: I think Matthew will go and watch TV instead of doing his spellings because he doesn’t want to do his spellings.

Opinion

Example question: Do you think Matthew’s mum is a kind person? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Answer: Yes, I think Matthew’s mum is a kind person because she is cooking his favourite meal. We also know she wants him to do well at school, which is why she asks him to practise his spellings.

Commenting on effectiveness of language

Example question: ‘Matthew thought practising spellings was a bit like watching paint dry.’ Why is this a good way to show how Matthew feels about his spellings?

Answer: The author is comparing spelling practice to watching paint dry to show how boring Matthew finds it.

Helping Your Child with Reading Comprehension

Tasks set for homework

Helping at Home

Let your child read through the passage by her/himself first. Then re-read the extract together, clarifying meanings of unfamiliar words and ideas in the text.

Don't accept decoding (just reading the words) as evidence of your child's comprehension – he/she needs to understand the meaning, inference and deductions within the book, which may not be obvious.

Spend a good amount of time thoroughly reading the text before looking at the questions and really make sure your child has understood what he/she is reading about.

Discuss the contents by asking simple questions about the characters, their actions and the setting. Discuss what the problem is in the story, how the characters try to solve it and what happens in the end. Make predictions about what might have happened before the beginning of the extract, or what might happen next.

To help your child understand inference, encourage him to look out for anything that seems a bit strange in the context of the text. For example, in the sentence, "Oh marvellous, I've got ironing to do," said Mum. - does anything strike them as being not quite what it seems? Is Mum really pleased she has ironing? What is she saying it's marvellous for then?

Ensure your child reads the questions properly. Even simple questions can trip children up if, for example, they are asked to tick three boxes to show how a character is feeling, and only tick two.

Begin by looking for key words in the first question. Often the first question is literal and prepares the reader for more in-depth questions to follow.

Make sure your child uses the text as evidence to back up his/her answers, rather than his/her general knowledge.

Answer the questions they can do, then go back through and try the harder ones. They don't have to answer the question immediately if they can't do it. Don't waste lots of time thinking about a question they are really stuck on.

Reading comprehension is not a memory test; all the information your child needs is there on the page. Encourage patience and perseverance; if the answer isn't immediately obvious, get your child to re-read the text, and it may come to him/her.