

BOOSTING COMPREHENSION

Chloe predicts what might happen next in a book. Thomas draws pictures about the stories he reads. And Jayla puts on puppet shows to act out her favorite books. These children are deepening their understanding of stories. Doing the activities in this guide will strengthen your youngster's reading comprehension, too.



TAKE A PICTURE WALK

A picture is worth a thousand words! Try this idea to show your child how looking at illustrations before reading helps her get ready to understand a book.

Choose a picture book your youngster hasn't read before, and cover up the words with sticky notes. Then, have her go on a "picture walk" by turning the pages and describing what she sees. *Example:* "The bulldozer is scooping up dirt."

Now remove the sticky notes, and read the book with her. Ask your child to point out information she picked up just from the pictures.

ACTIVATE BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE



Does your youngster know that everything he learns gets "saved" in his brain—just like files are saved on a computer? Help him "activate" this background knowledge to improve his comprehension.

Have your child draw a picture of his brain on a sheet of paper. Look at a book cover together, and let him fill the brain with words that come to mind. For a story about the beach, he might write *ocean, waves, swim, sandcastle, bucket, and hot*. Ask him to tell you about the words. ("You need sand and water to make a sandcastle.") These are things he knows about the beach!

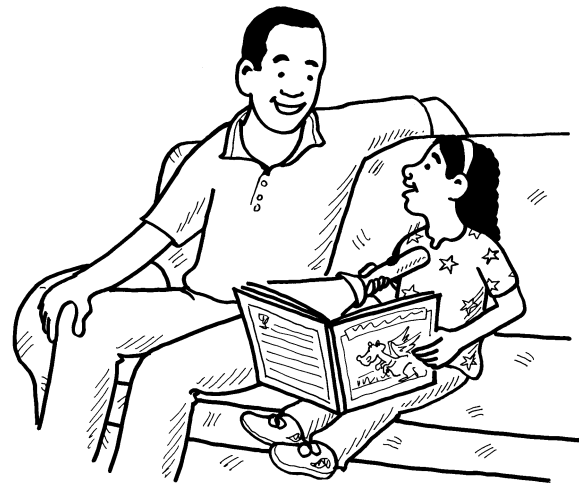
Then, read the book with him. Each time he spots a word he wrote, he gets to put a check mark beside it on his "brain." He'll see that knowing something about a topic makes a story easier to understand—and more fun to read.

MAKE FLASHLIGHT PREDICTIONS

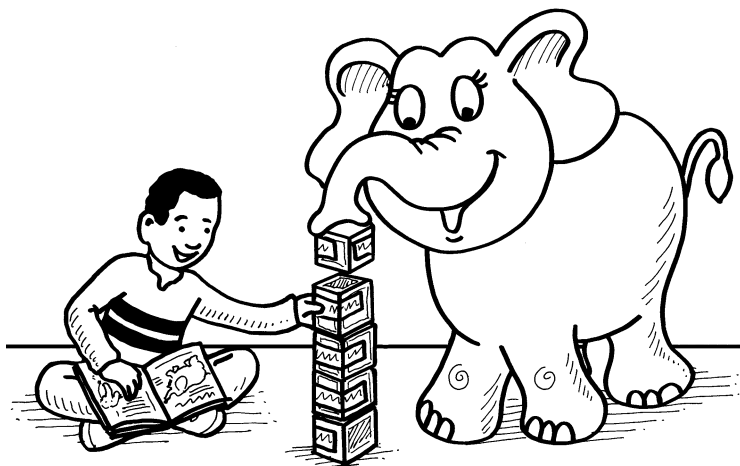
Thinking about what could happen next can deepen your youngster's comprehension. Encourage her to make predictions as she reads with this activity.

Take turns holding a flashlight while you read a book together. When the person holding the flashlight has a prediction, she turns on the light and says, "Light bulb moment!" Then, she shares what she predicts will happen and why. ("I think the dragon that Harold drew with his purple crayon will eat all the apples on the tree.")

Keep passing the flashlight back and forth and sharing predictions until you reach the end of the book. *Note:* The flashlight holder may also call a "light bulb moment" to revise a prediction she has already made. ("Oh, the dragon scared Harold. Now I predict Harold will draw a way to escape.")



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BUILD A MAIN IDEA TOWER

Here's a hands-on way for your youngster to explore main ideas and details in nonfiction.

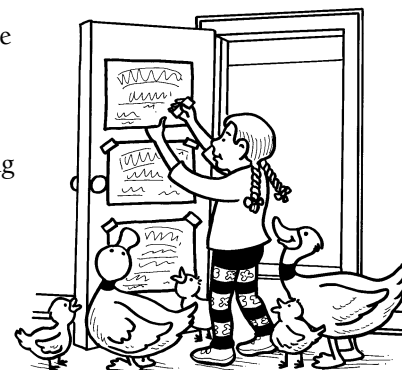
Let your child choose a nonfiction book. After you've both read it, ask him what it was mainly about (for instance, how and where elephants live). He can write this main idea on a strip of masking tape and put the tape on a building block. Now search the book for details about the main idea, and help him label another block for each one. *Examples:* "Eat grass and leaves," "Live in Africa and Asia," "Use trunks to hug." Finally, suggest that he stack the blocks with the "main idea" block at the top. He'll see that details "support" the main idea.

CREATE CHARACTER AWARDS

Encourage your youngster to get to know storybook characters by giving them awards. That will help her better understand characters' traits, feelings, and actions, increasing her overall comprehension of the story.

After reading a book, suggest that your child think of an award that each character deserves. For *Make Way for Ducklings* (Robert McCloskey), maybe she'll give Mrs. Mallard an award for being careful and Michael an award for being helpful. Now she could use construction paper and crayons to make certificates. She can write each character's name on the award, along with the title of the book and what the award is for.

Let your youngster hang the awards on her bedroom door and use them to tell you about the characters.



TRADE CLUES

Play this game to help your child draw conclusions from a story.

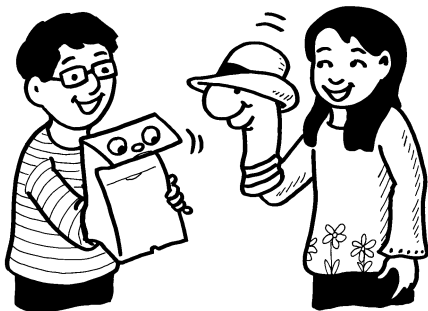
Skim through a book (without showing it to your youngster), and write down three sentences that could lead him to a conclusion about the plot. *Examples:* "Jack's mother took his temperature." "Jack watched through his bedroom window as other kids played outside." "Jack was excited to go back to school." Ask your child what he might conclude (Jack was sick).

Now let your youngster browse through a book and write three sentences for you to use to reach a conclusion.

RETELLING A TALE

When your child tells a story in his own words, he strengthens his reading comprehension. Retelling is also something he does in school—it shows his teacher how well he understands what he reads. Use these ideas to make retelling fun at home!

PAINT A STORY MURAL. Have your youngster paint story events on separate sheets of paper labeled "Beginning," "Middle," and "End." When his paintings dry, help him tape them together and hang his mural in a hallway. Then, he can pretend to be a museum tour guide and lead your family down the hallway, using his paintings to retell the story.

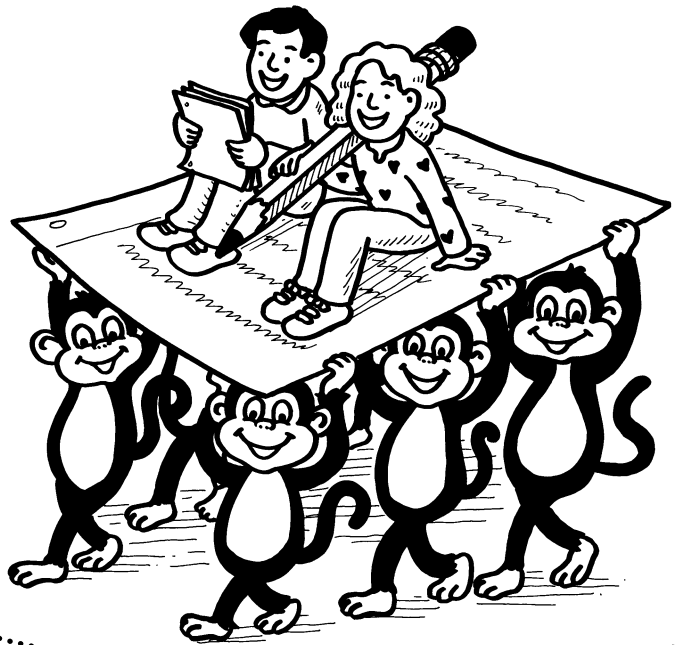


PUT ON A PUPPET SHOW. Let the next book your children read become the inspiration for a puppet show. Give them brown paper lunch bags or old socks to turn into puppets. They could draw each character's face on the bottom of a bag or glue craft materials onto a sock. It's show time! Listen as they retell the story in their own words, using a different voice for each character.

FOLLOW A PATH. Ask your child to draw a long, winding line on pavement with sidewalk chalk. Next, help him add these labels spaced out along the line: "Characters," "Setting," "Problem," and "Solution." He can pretend the line is a tightrope and walk along it. Whenever he gets to a label, he retells that part of the story before moving on. For example, on "Setting," he'll describe where the story takes place. ("The brothers lived on a big farm with green fields and a red barn.")

It's Fun to Write!

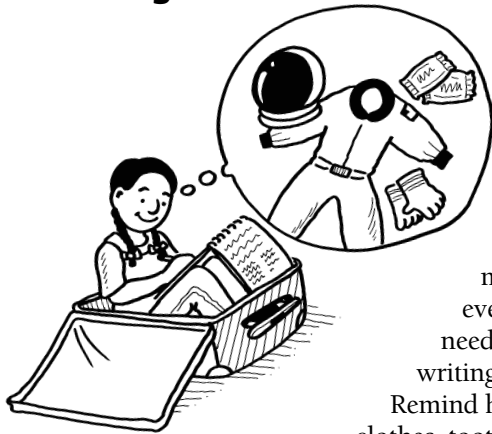
All kinds of writing practice can fit easily into your child's days. With the 10 activities in this guide, he'll write to entertain, inform, and even persuade his readers. And he'll build skills like using descriptive language, being specific, adding details, and more.



1. Family survey

Does your family prefer cats or dogs? Would you rather eat noodles or rice? Your youngster can conduct a daily poll to find out the answers to questions like those. He'll learn to write questions, and you'll all discover more about one another. Help him write a question with two choices for an answer ("Do you like spring or fall better?") and tape it on an empty tissue box. Each person should vote on a slip of paper and drop it in the box. At the end of the day, have him count the votes and announce the results.

2. Packing list



Is your child planning a sleepover at Grandma's, or is your family taking a vacation? Ask your youngster to make a list of everything she'll need. She'll see that writing is practical.

Remind her to include clothes, toothbrush and toothpaste, books, toys, and snacks. *Idea:* Suggest that she make a list for an imaginary trip to anyplace she likes (the moon, a castle, ocean floor). She can think about what special supplies each place would require. Perhaps she'd pack a space suit and freeze-dried food for the moon, or scuba gear and a waterproof camera for an undersea adventure.

3. Picnic menu

Making a menu is a great way to work on descriptive writing. The next time you plan a picnic, let your youngster write out a special menu. Ask him to look in the refrigerator and pantry to decide what you'll eat. Fold a sheet of paper into thirds, and help him write the names of the foods in categories. He might put sandwiches in one column, side dishes in another, and drinks in a third. Encourage him to use as many adjectives as possible: "Creamy peanut butter and sweet strawberry slices on whole-wheat bread" or "Crunchy orange carrots with cool ranch dip." Use your child's ideas to pack the food, and then display his menu at your picnic!

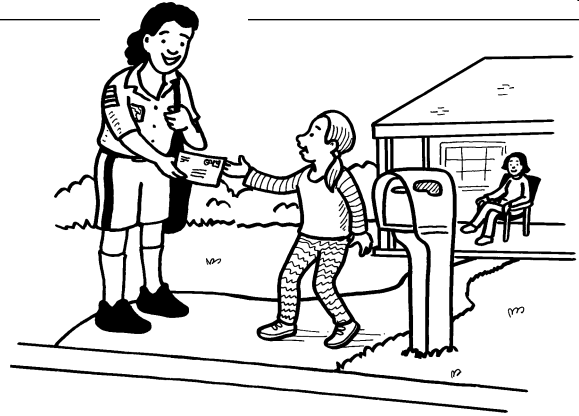
4. Comedy skit

Your youngster will be motivated to write with this laugh-out-loud activity. For one week, ask each family member to find something that makes her laugh, and write it down. You could help your child jot down a joke that a friend told her or a silly line from a TV show. Or write your own original jokes! At the end of the week, hold a stand-up comedy night. Everyone takes a turn reading their funny material.



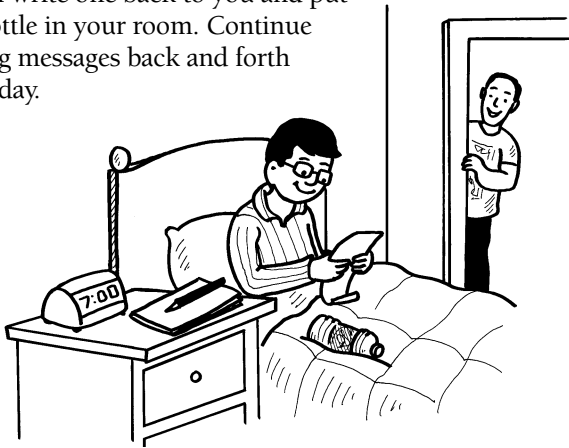
5. Greeting cards

Work on poetry by creating homemade greeting cards. Put your youngster in charge of writing the verses to go inside. She can do this for birthday, anniversary, get well, and thank you cards. Give her ideas by showing her old cards your family has received. Also, you could help her make lists of words to use (*blue, Sue, new, shoe*). *Example*: “Roses are red, violets are blue, Happy Birthday to my Aunt Sue!” Suggest that your child fold construction paper in half, write her verse inside, and use markers or crayons to illustrate her card.



6. Message in a bottle

Keep in touch with your youngster while encouraging him to write. Secretly write a message for him on a piece of paper, roll it up, and slip it into an empty, dry water bottle (make sure the paper is sticking out of the bottle so it's easy to pull out). Leave the bottle in his room. After he reads his message, he can write one back to you and put the bottle in your room. Continue leaving messages back and forth every day.



7. Advertisement

Have your child practice persuasive writing by creating an advertisement. If you're holding a yard sale or hiring a babysitter, let her help you write a classified newspaper ad. Or she can suggest descriptions of household items to sell online. Talk about ways to describe objects (color, size) and how to get readers' attention (“perfect condition” or “one of a kind”). For example, if your youngster has outgrown her bike, she might write, “Lime green bike. 12 inch. Looks brand new.”

8. Family announcements

Your child is probably familiar with morning announcements at school. Together, discuss what they usually contain (results of games or tournaments, schedule of upcoming events). Then, help your youngster write weekly announcements to keep everyone in your house up to date. Each Sunday evening, he can post a list on the refrigerator: “Jake's soccer team won on Saturday” or “Mom has a job interview on Monday.” *Idea*: Help him make stationery for his announcements on the computer or by hand and add a special heading (“Radcliffe Family News”).

9. Author mail

Your youngster can write to her favorite author or poet! Together, find the person's email or regular address by typing his name and “fan mail” into a search engine. In her letter, suggest that she say which of his books she likes best and why. For instance, she could tell Mo Willems, “*Knuffle Bunny* is my favorite because I have a favorite stuffed animal who goes places with me, too!” Remind your child to ask the author a question or two (*example*: “How old were you when your first book was published?”). Finally, help her proofread her note by checking that each sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a period.

10. Game rules

Has your youngster ever played Dinosaur Hide-and-Seek? How about Musical Tag? Ask him to invent a new game and create a set of rules for it. He'll learn to write clear instructions. You may need to prompt him with questions such as “What do you do first?” or “How do you win the game?” For Dinosaur Hide-and-Seek, he might list:

1. Pick one person to be “It.”
2. Everyone else hides.
3. “It” counts to 10.
4. Everyone roars like a dinosaur.
5. “It” follows the sounds to find the players.
6. The last person he finds wins and becomes “It.”



Be a Reading Star

2019 EDITION

Your youngster can pick books from the list below and start reading! Every time he reads a new book, help him fill in the log on page 2. Complete the log, and he's an official reading star!



Chocolate Milk, Por Favor! (Maria Dismondy)

When Gabe starts school in America, he speaks only Spanish and has no friends. Then during recess he shows the kids a cool soccer trick, and his classmate Johnny realizes they're not that different after all. Based on a true story.



Oops, Pounce, Quick, Run! **An Alphabet Caper**

(Mike Twohy)

Follow along from A to Z as a dog's ball rolls into a mouse's house, leading to a wild chase.

Will the two end up making peace? Perfect for a read-aloud.

The Book of Mistakes (Corinna Luyken)

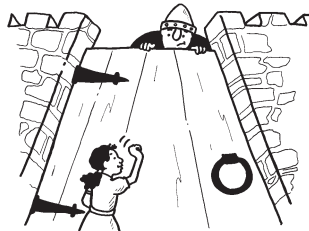
With this story, children will discover that making mistakes isn't always a bad thing. In fact, mistakes can lead to creativity. Watch as the illustrations come to life page by page, mixing "good ideas" and "mistakes" to create a wonderful, whimsical scene.

Because of an Acorn (Lola M. Schaefer and Adam Schaefer)

What does an acorn have to do with a hawk? Readers can find out in this nonfiction book about a forest. Learn how plants and animals depend on each other for survival and why a little acorn is so important. A glossary lists forest-related science words.

The Very Last Castle (Travis Jonker)

The town where Ibb lives has a single castle with a guard in the tower. But the townspeople think there might be monsters, giants, and even snakes inside. One day, Ibb knocks on the door—only to run away when she hears a scary sound. Then she gets an invitation to visit and decides to bravely see for herself what's inside!



Pink is for Blobfish: Discovering the World's Perfectly Pink Animals (Jess Keating)

Forget everything you know about the color pink! It's not just for flowers and "pretty" things. From blobfish to pink dolphins and naked mole rats, this nonfiction book contains information on all kinds of pink creatures. Your child will learn about their diets, habitats, and more. Part of the World of Weird Animals series.

Quinito, Day and Night / Quinito, día y noche

(Ina Cumpiano)

A little boy named Quinito introduces us to his family and his life in this story told in English and Spanish. Readers meet his siblings Clara and Juan, and Quinito explains how they're alike and different. Explore how families are made up of all kinds of people. Includes a bilingual glossary.

The Good Egg (Jory John)

In a carton of wacky and wild eggs, there's one good egg. He's always doing favors and good deeds, but he gets frustrated that the other eggs aren't "good" like him. When his shell starts to crack from all the stress, he takes a break and leaves his carton. He finds he needs to take care of himself if he wants to care for others, and he even starts to miss the carton!



Keep a Pocket in Your Poem: Classic Poems and Playful Parodies (J. Patrick Lewis)

This collection of classic poems and parodies will have readers laughing and perhaps even inspire them to create their own silly versions of poems. Enjoy a twist on Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," called "Stopping by the Fridge on a Hungry Evening," and more.

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My Reading Log



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Reading Connection Beginning Edition