

# The Road to Better Comprehension

Growing as a reader is a journey that continues long after your child has learned to recognize letters and sound out words. He'll need strategies like the ones in this guide to understand and enjoy all kinds of reading material. Buckle up, and try these ideas for better comprehension!



## Get ready for the trip



Before you travel to a new place, researching what you'll see helps you appreciate it even more. Getting ready to read a new book works

the same way! Help your youngster tap into what he knows about a topic with this idea.

In a journal, he could create an entry for each book before he reads it. He can divide the page into columns labeled "I know" and "I wonder." In column one, he could write what he already knows about the topic ("Fruits have seeds inside, and vegetables don't"). In column two, he might write, "Are tomatoes and avocados fruits or vegetables?"

As your child reads, suggest that he check off each "I wonder" item that he learns. Invite him to share his new knowledge with you.

## Look at the scenery

Book illustrators use details from the text to decide what the pictures should look like. Good readers do the same thing—except they imagine the illustrations in their minds. This helps them to read more actively. Here's how to get your youngster in the habit of visualizing while she reads.

Have her read a few pages of a book aloud. Now each of you can draw what you "saw" and compare your sketches. How are they similar and different? Maybe you both drew the main character with a surprised expression, for example. Or perhaps you each pictured the setting differently.

Now finish reading the chapter or book, and draw new pictures. How did your mental images change from the first picture?



## Reading critically: Find landmarks

Deciding whether information is accurate is an important comprehension skill. Help your youngster learn to spot "landmarks" in a book or an article that suggest it's reliable.



**Names and numbers.** Encourage your child to look for quotes attributed to real people or groups.

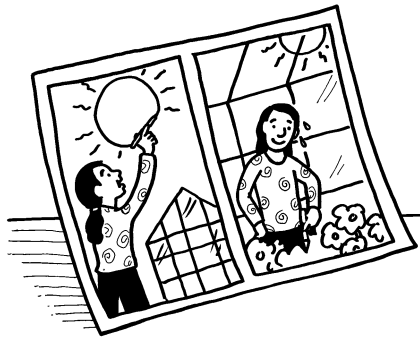
Also, a reliable source will often include numbers or percentages. On the other hand, vague statements ("Most people think that...,"

"Everyone agrees that...") are less apt to be trustworthy. *Note:* Your youngster should always check names and statistics against other sources.

**Spelling and grammar.** Does your child see errors? That's a tip-off that the information might not be solid. Most reliable sources have proofreaders who check for mistakes before a book or an article is published.

**Tone and style.** Suggest that your youngster keep an eye out for outrageous claims and the overuse of adjectives and exclamation points. *Example:* "The humongous, mysterious cloud hovered over the small town!!!" If something sounds unrealistic or exaggerated, it probably is.

## Stop for cause and effect



Why are greenhouses warm? Why is the main character mean to her classmates? Suggest that your child draw comics to explore cause and effect—and gain a deeper understanding of a book.

Have her draw two frames for a comic. She can illustrate a cause in the first frame and an effect in the second. If she's reading about greenhouses, she might draw the sun shining through the glass in the "cause" frame. Then she could think, "What did the book say about the sun's effect on a greenhouse?" In the

"effect" frame, she might draw a picture showing thermal energy trapped inside a greenhouse.

Encourage her to create a new comic for each cause and effect she reads about. She can staple them together to make a booklet—and see a pattern of causes and effects.

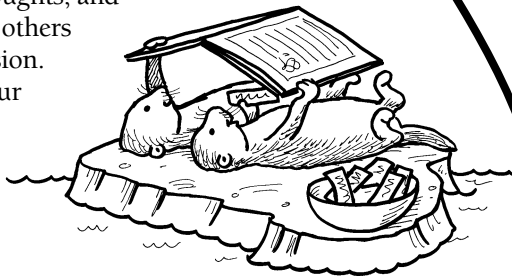
## What's around the bend?

Authors don't always come right out and explain what's happening in a book. Sometimes your child will need to *infer*, or read between the lines. Practice with this guessing game.

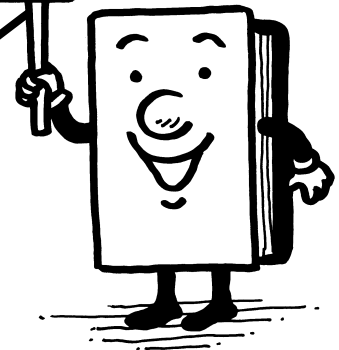
Secretly think of a situation, and give clues to help your youngster infer what's going on. *Example:* "My eyes are itchy. I keep sneezing. There's cat hair on my jacket. What's going on?" Your child might infer that you're having an allergic reaction to a cat. Next, he can give you clues about a scenario. ("I'm flying down the sidewalk. I push the pedals with my feet. What am I doing?") You could infer that he's riding his bike.

## Talking about your "trip"

Sharing opinions, thoughts, and ideas about a book with others strengthens comprehension. Read the same book your child reads, or suggest that she and a friend read the same book, then try this.



On separate slips of paper, each person writes questions that can't be answered just by looking in the book. *Example:* "What would you say to the main character if you met him in real life?" Mix up the slips in a bowl, and take turns drawing a slip and discussing the question. You might have each person explain her answer and use details from the book to back it up.



## Time for a tune-up

Strong readers monitor their understanding and use strategies to get back on track if something doesn't make sense. If your child gets confused while reading, he can try these ideas.

**Read it aloud.** Saying and hearing the words out loud may trigger an "aha" moment. If your youngster is in a situation where he can't read aloud, he could whisper or mouth the words.

**Slow down.** Reading too fast can make things hard to understand. Have your child go back and read a difficult part slowly, pausing at the end of each sentence to let it sink in.




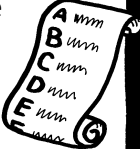



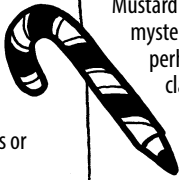
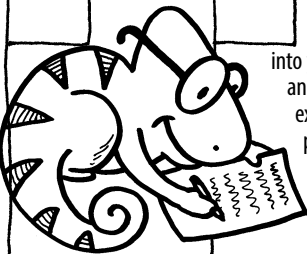

**Use graphics.** Looking at pictures, diagrams, graphs, and fact boxes will give clues to the meaning of the text. He might even draw his own graphic to demonstrate a concept.

**Make a U-turn.** Encourage your youngster to skip ahead to the next part. Maybe it will include information that helps him understand the big picture. Then, he can go back and reread the part that didn't make sense before.

**Note to parents:** Every day is a great day for writing! Hang up this calendar to inspire your child to write stories, instructions, persuasive pieces, and more.




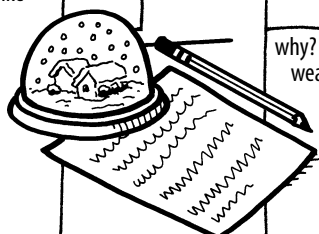

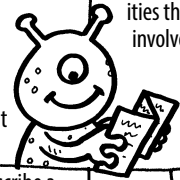
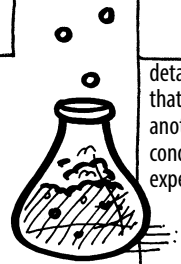
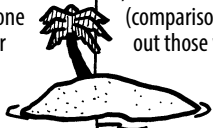


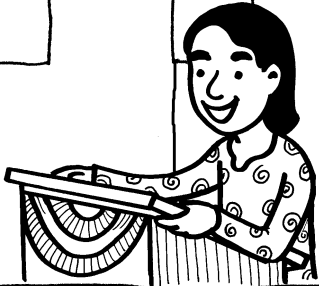
# Writing Prompt of the Day

MONTH

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		Imagine you're invisible. Write a story about a day in your life. Where would you go, and what would you do? How could you help people if you were invisible?	You meet a time traveler from the past. Write a letter to persuade him to buy (and use) a smartphone.	Write step-by-step instructions that a kindergartner could use to tie his shoes. Have someone test your instructions. 	Would a kangaroo make a good pet? Write an argument for or against it. Be sure to include kangaroo facts.	Describe something you're an expert at. Tell another person how she could become an expert, too.
Rewrite a story from a different character's point of view. For instance, retell <i>Peter Pan</i> (J. M. Barrie) with Captain Hook narrating the story.	Fill in the blank: My favorite thing to do on vacation is _____. Then, explain the reasons behind your choice.		Imagine you've conducted an interview with a famous historical figure. Write a news article about the person.	Write a letter introducing yourself to a new teacher. What should he know about you?	Onomatopoeia is when a word sounds like its own name ( <i>buzz</i> , <i>pop</i> ). Write a graphic novel-style story, and work in 10 examples.	Write the alphabet down the left side of a sheet of paper. Create a poem in which each line begins with a different letter. 
Pick two very different characters from your favorite book. Imagine that they're having a conversation, and write dialogue for them. 	Write an adventure story about travelers lost in space. What problems do they encounter, and how do they solve them?	What's a chore that you do regularly? Write a "help wanted" advertisement for it. What information should your ad contain?	Select an interesting photo from a book, magazine, or family album. Now make up a story about it, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. 	Describe your favorite meal. Choose specific words so that someone who has never tried it gets an idea of how it looks, smells, and tastes.	Think of a person who was kind to you or helped you with a problem recently. Write a thank you note to that person.	Choose an important lesson you learned when you were younger, and write a "how to" story about it. <i>Example:</i> "How to Make a Friend."
$3 \times 4 = 12$ 	Make up a math story problem based on a fairy tale. <i>Example:</i> "Three bears lived in a cottage. If each bear invited four friends to a party, how many guests would there be?"	Pretend you are starting your own business. Write the script for a commercial that will convince customers to buy your goods or services. 	Use a board game to inspire a story. Maybe Colonel Mustard will solve a mystery in Clue, or perhaps your class will take a field trip to Candy Land.	Invent a holiday to celebrate today. What will you name your holiday? How will you celebrate? Write all about it!	Uh-oh, there's a word shortage. You get only 10 words to describe yourself, so choose carefully. Which words will you pick?	Write about a difficult choice you have made. What were your options, and how did you decide what to do?
	Imagine that you have been turned into your favorite animal. List and explain the pros and cons of your new life.	Name a cause that you care about like animal rights or the environment. Design a flyer filled with information that will persuade others to help, too.	Write a "Did you know?" booklet that includes fascinating facts about your favorite sport, hobby, or place.	Think about your most valued possession. Use vivid adjectives to help a reader "see" your treasure as she reads about it.		

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		Write a haiku about your favorite sound. A haiku is a poem with three lines. The first and last lines each have five syllables, and the middle line has seven.	Come up with a story idea that would make a good movie. Write a summary of it—and an argument for why a movie studio should film it.	Exchange writing prompts with a friend. Each of you thinks of three prompts for the other. Swap and write!	Craft a story from a pet's point of view. What does the pet think about? What does it do when no one is home?	
Should robots have rights like people do? Write an argument defending your answer.	Make a card for a friend. Draw a picture of him, or glue a photo onto the card. Include a caption for the picture. 	Think of an idiom like "when pigs fly" or "bite off more than you can chew." Write a story that explains where the saying came from. 	What season do you like best, and why? Describe the weather and your favorite activities of that season.	Write about a job you would like to have when you grow up. What would your typical workday be like?	Explore alliteration! See how many times you can use the same beginning sound in a single sentence. <i>Example:</i> "She shopped for shiny shoes."	
Interview someone in your family about the most interesting thing they've ever done. Write and illustrate a picture book about it, and share it with the person.	Make up a poem titled "If My Day Were a Rainbow." Use a different color word in each line.	Write about an event you want to remember forever. Include answers to the "five W" questions (who, what, when, where, and why). 	Invent a secret identity for yourself. What would your name be, and what superpower would you have?	Create a travel brochure for an alien from another planet visiting Earth. What places are "must see"? What does he need to know about humans? 	On separate index cards, write instructions for different boredom-busting activities that don't involve screen time.	Write a nice description of a family member that doesn't include the person's name. Can your family guess who you described?
Use hyperbole (extreme exaggeration) to finish this sentence: "The fish was so big that _____."		Do a science experiment. Write detailed instructions that would allow another scientist to conduct the same experiment.	If you were traveling to a deserted island, what three things would you pack? Write about what makes each one important for your trip. 	Describe a stuffed animal using at least two similes (comparisons that use <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> ) and two metaphors (comparisons without those words).	Close your eyes, and put your finger on a spot on a map or globe. Now open your eyes, and write a story with that location as the setting. 	Write a menu for your dream restaurant. Be sure to include mouth-watering descriptions of the appetizers, entrees, sides, and desserts.
What do you think is the hardest part of being a grown-up? How does it compare to the hardest part of being a kid? Explain both sides.	Invent a new card game. Make up a fun name for it, and write the rules for playing it.	Write a play or skit based on your favorite book, movie, or TV show. 	You discover a secret door. Write about what you find on the other side.	Pretend you are running for a seat on the student council. Write a persuasive speech about a change you'd like to make at school.		

# Be a Reading Star

**2019 Edition**

Encourage your youngster to pick a book from the list below and choose a cozy place to read. Each time she finishes a book, she can write the title and the author's name in the special star log on page 2—and be on her way to becoming a reading star!

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## **The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora** (Pablo Cartaya)

Summer break for Arturo means hanging out with his friends and working at his grandparents' Cuban restaurant, La Cocina. When a land developer wants to buy the restaurant, Arturo and his family fight to protect La Cocina and their community. Includes poetry and family recipes.

## **What a Waste! Where Does Garbage Go?** (Claire Eamer)



Learn everything you wanted to know—and probably a lot more—about trash! This nonfiction book features weird, gross, and interesting facts. Discover how humans create garbage, what happens to it, and innovative ways for reducing waste.

## **Our Moon: New Discoveries About Earth's Closest Companion** (Elaine Scott)

Youngsters will blast off into space as they read fun facts about the moon. For instance, it would take 135 days to travel to the moon by car (if it were possible to do so!). Contains detailed photos, charts, and a glossary.

## **Power Forward** (Hena Khan)

Zayd Saleem dreams of becoming the first Pakistani-American NBA player. But his parents want him to play the violin rather than basketball. Will Zayd's parents ever understand why he loves basketball so much? The first book in the Zayd Saleem Chasing the Dream series.

## **Draw Out the Story: Ten Secrets to Creating Your Own Comics** (Brian McLachlan)

Fans of comic books and graphic novels will love this guide. Set up in a graphic-novel format, it offers tips on everything from storytelling to grammar. All your child has to do is grab a pencil and paper, pick a format, and begin!

## **Water Rolls, Water Rises / El agua rueda, el agua sube** (Pat Mora)

Water is the star of this poetry book that presents each verse in English and Spanish. Readers will learn about the



states of water (liquid, gas, solid) and the many ways it shapes landscapes. Illustrated with watercolor paintings inspired by real places.

## **Woof: A Bowser and Birdie Novel** (Spencer Quinn)

In a Louisiana swamp town, Birdie and her dog Bowser try to find a missing family heirloom: a stuffed marlin stolen from Birdie's grandmother's bait shop. The duo combines excellent smelling skills (Bowser) and investigative techniques (Birdie) in this tale narrated by Bowser. The first book in the Bowser and Birdie adventure series.



## **Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus** (Dusti Bowling)

Aven is a young girl who was born without arms. Her world is turned upside down when her family moves to Arizona and she has to go to a new school, meet new people, and explain why she has no arms. Then she meets Connor, a boy with Tourette syndrome. The two bond over their challenges—and work together to solve a mystery.

## **Library on Wheels: Mary Lemist Titcomb and America's First Bookmobile** (Sharlee Glenn)

Go back in time to the early 1900s in this true story about a librarian named Mary. She wanted everyone to have access to books, so she invented the bookmobile: a horse-drawn wagon that delivered books to people who lived far from libraries.



*continued*



# My Reading Log



1	_____	_____
	Title	Author
2	_____	_____
	Title	Author
3	_____	_____
	Title	Author
4	_____	_____
	Title	Author
★ 5	_____	_____
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