Pathways to Parents

by The Literacy Company



Supporting children in their journey to becoming a reader is one of the most important things parents can do. Once children become fluent, active readers they begin to make sense of the world around them, to ask and answer questions and to encounter worlds both real and imagined that are beyond their own experience.

As the National Curriculum says, "Children need to read widely across both fiction and non-fiction to develop their knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live, to establish an appreciation and love of reading, and to gain knowledge across the curriculum. This also increases pupils' vocabulary because they encounter words they would rarely hear or use in everyday speech."

In the curriculum, reading is divided into two strands: Word Reading and Comprehension. The bridge between the two is referred to as Reading Fluency. Word Reading is perhaps the area most traditionally supported by parents, as children learn to phonetically decode the words on the page.

Fluency is just as important. By re-reading books, children learn to read more accurately, at an appropriate speed and with expression. This supports their comprehension because their effort goes into understanding what they read, rather than what the words say. As fluency grows, motivation increases. Children start to enjoy reading more and begin to do it without prompting.

Parents often stop reading with their children once fluency has been achieved. Pupils can read independently so parents' efforts are shifted elsewhere. However, having discussions with them about what they have read will do much to support a child's reading.

Comprehension can be broken down into various skills. These are practised within school during reading sessions but they can also form the basis of discussions at home in a more informal context:

- Clarifying vocabulary to explain what new words mean
- Retrieving key information from what has been read
- Summarising
- Inferring – reading between the lines
- Predicting what may happen next or what may have come before
- Unpicking why an author uses particular words and phrases
- Discussing the layout and organisation of a text
- Making comparisons between and within books

Here at The Literacy Company, we've put together a series of questions linked to each of the comprehension skills that will help parents guide discussions to support reading at home.

Please copy this page along with the questions for the relevant year group and share with parents at your next meeting.

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NURSERY



Clarify vocabulary	• Which is the rhyming word? Which other words rhyme with this? • What does _____ (new word) mean? e.g. 'enormous', 'roar', 'invitation'.
Retrieve	• Who/ what/ where/ which/ when...? • What happened to ... at the end? • What is your favourite part of the book? Explain why you like it.
Summarise	• Retell the main events – beginning, middle and end. Show your child how to do this and encourage them to remember much of what happens, prompting with questions if necessary.
Infer	• Who is your favourite character and why? • "I wonder what happened to that character.....?" • Help your child elaborate on their ideas: "That character looks sad. Do you think it is because...?"
Predict	• Look at the cover/ title/ blurb. Think about who/ what the characters, setting, events might be. • Will this story have a happy ending? • What might happen to the character in the end?
Structure and organisation	• Find the front cover, title, back cover, blurb. • What does the author do? • Follow the text with your finger from left to right and top to bottom and encourage children to do the same.
Language choice	• Find the rhyme/ repeated phrase. Join in when it comes up. • Spot words that start with the same initial sound. • Count or clap syllables in a word.

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RECEPTION

Clarify vocabulary	• Are there any words you don't know the meaning of? Explain these to your child and use during other conversations. • Which is the rhyming word? Which other words rhyme with this?
Retrieve	• Who/ what/ where/ which/ when...? • What happened to... at the end? • What is your favourite part of the book? Explain why you like it.
Summarise	• Retell the main events – What happened at the beginning, middle and end? • Re-read stories multiple times to build fluency and understanding.
Infer	• How do the characters think/ feel/ react about the events as you read each page? • How can you tell that? • Who is your favourite character and why?
Predict	• Look at the cover/ title/ blurb . What/ who might the characters, setting, events be in this story? • Will this story have a happy ending? What makes you think that?
Structure and organisation	• Find the labels, title, diagram, page, book cover, information on... • Discuss whether a book is fiction or non-fiction.
Language choice	• Can you find the rhyme/ repeated phrase? Join in when it comes up. • How might the line finish? Which word might the author choose?



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YEAR 1

Clarify vocabulary	• Which word tells you about the character/ setting? • Can you think of another word for...? (or give examples of other words that mean the same.)
Retrieve	• Who/ what/ where/ which/ when...? • What happened at the end? • Can you list all three places the main character visited? • What is your favourite part of the book? Why do you like it?
Summarise	• Can you retell the main events to another family member who has not read the book? • List 3 things that happen to the character in the story. • What is the information telling us?
Infer	• How/ why did _____ feel/ react? How can you tell that? • What does this tell us about how (character) is feeling? • Who is your favourite character and why?
Predict	• Look at the front cover/ title/ blurb. Who/ what might the characters, setting, events be? • Will this story have a happy ending? What makes you think that? • Did the character change in this story? How? Why?
Structure and organisation	• Find the labels, title, diagram, page, book cover, information on... • Support your child to use the contents page. e.g. On which page can I find information about ____? • Discuss whether a book is fiction or non-fiction.
Language choice	• Find the rhyme/ repeated phrase. Join in when it comes up. • How does the story start? Which words are used? • What is your favourite word in the story, the poem, the information? Can you put it into your own sentence?



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YEAR 2

Clarify vocabulary	• Find words which tell you about the character/ setting. • Can you think of another word for ___? • Which word on this page means the same as....?
Retrieve	• Give one reason that ___happens/ the character behaves this way. • Tell me about your favourite part of the book. Explain why you like it. • Why did...? What did...? Where did...? When did...? Which two...? • Do you think this book is trying to give the reader a message? What is it? • Under which sub-heading, would I find information about...
Summarise	• Can you retell the story using one sentence per picture? • What is this paragraph of information telling us? Sum up in one sentence.
Infer	• How did (character) feel when...?/ Why was (character) sad /happy? • How do we know...? What does this certain line tell us? Why is it important?
Predict	• What does the cover/ title/ blurb make you think will happen? • What is happening now? What happened before? What might happen next? Discuss the reasons for thinking this. • Is this story similar to any others you have read or films you have seen? Are any characters like people you have met?
Structure and organisation	• Find the labels, title, subheadings, diagram, contents page, information on... How do these help us to read the text? • Find three facts about... • Support your child to use the index and glossary.
Language choice	• Find the words which tell us when things happen? • Which words make this sound like a fairy story? • What is your favourite word in the story, the poem, the information?



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YEAR 3



Clarify vocabulary	•What does... mean in this sentence? • Use a dictionary to find out what words mean, maybe during a homework task. • Use a thesaurus to find other words that mean the same as ....
Retrieve	• What is...? Why had...? Who else...? What event...? Why do...? Where? • Support your child to use the contents page/ index/ glossary to find information. • Talk about your favourite part of the book. Explain why you like it.
Summarise	• Retell the main events in the story to someone else in the family. • Which three words would you use to describe what the story is about/ about the character to someone else who hasn't read it?
Infer	• Why was (character) sad/happy/nervous? How do you know? • How do you feel about (character)? Why? • Encourage your child to use words from the book to back up their opinion. • Discuss the themes in this story. (e.g. good over evil, weak over strong, friendship, magic).
Predict	• Look at the cover/ blurb/ inside cover and discuss what might happen in the story/ characters who may appear. • What is happening now? What happened before this? What might happen next? Discuss your child's reasons using evidence from the text. • Is the character similar to any other characters / people you know? How would they behave in this situation?
Structure and organisation	• Find the labels, title, subheadings, diagram, contents page, index, glossary and practise using them. • Why is the word ____ in bold print / italics? • How does the writer make it interesting / engaging/ exciting in the first paragraph/ ending?
Language choice	• Can you find the repeated words/ patterns/ alliteration/ rhyme in the text? • Find the words which move time on in the story. • Which are the words which make this sound like a traditional tale, myth, adventure, sci-fi story?

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YEAR 4

Clarify vocabulary	• Find one word which tells you about a character/ setting/ mood. • What does... mean in this sentence? • Discuss other words which could replace one in the text. • During homework tasks, use a dictionary or thesaurus..
Retrieve	• Which two...? What is...? Why had...? Who else...? What event...? Where is? • Support your child to use the contents, index, glossary, sub-headings. • Discuss how the illustrations/diagrams/fact boxes/ sub-headings help us to find our way around the text. • Why is the word ___ in bold print / italics?
Summarise	• Retell the events in the story to someone else in the family who has not read the book. • Use five words to describe what the story/ paragraph/ chapter is about. • Can you choose three words to sum up the character/ setting?
Infer	• How do you feel about (character)? Why? • How is the character feeling here? How do you know? • Discuss the dilemma the character faced in the story? What did they decide to do? Why? What would you do? • Who is the hero/villain/victim/champion in the story? How do you know?
Predict	• Use the cover/ blurb/ inside cover to think what might happen. • Is the character similar to any other characters / people you know? • Find details which tell us about the setting/atmosphere and discuss what might happen here? Have you been to/ read about a setting like this before? What is your impression of this place?
Structure and organisation	• Ask your child to tell you about the features of different types of information writing – letters, diary writing, non-fiction. • Use the features to help you find information about... • Explain the theme of the paragraph or chapter.
Language choice	• Can you find the repeated words and any patterns in the text? • Find the words which move time on in the story. • Which are the words which make this sound like a traditional tale, a myth, adventure, sci-fi story? • Do we know how the writer feels about this? How? Is there a message?



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YEAR 5



Clarify vocabulary	• What does... mean in this sentence? • Find a word which means.../ tells you about the character/ setting/ mood. • Why is the word ___ in inverted commas? Discuss other words the author could have used instead of...
Retrieve	• What is...? Why had...? Who else...? What event...? Why do...? Why has..? • How do people feel about the...? How do you know? • How did _____ react when....? • Support your child to use the contents, index, glossary, sub-headings to find information.
Summarise	• Use a sentence/ word to sum up each section / paragraph of the story. • Use three words to sum up a character/ setting. • What is the main idea?
Infer	• Is ___ a fact or an opinion? • How do you feel about...? Why? • How can you tell? Encourage your child to use evidence to back up their opinion. • How does the writer feel about ....? How do you know?
Predict	• Use the cover/ blurb/ inside cover/ chapter name/ sub-heading to suggest what might happen. • How might characters change throughout this story? • Is the character similar to any other characters / people you know? How would they behave in this situation?
Structure and organisation	• Which difficulties did the character face? How did they deal with them? • Do you agree with the way the problem was solved/ story ended? Would you do the same? Discuss. • Were there any clues that... would happen?
Language choice	• Discuss what the writer thinks or the different messages, moods, feelings and attitudes within the book. Which phrases help to show us this? • How does the language choice tell you it was written a long time ago? • What makes you laugh in this book? Why is it funny?
Making comparisons	• Are there any similarities and differences between... (characters / settings / layout) • How did the characters' reactions differ/ mood change when...? • What makes this book similar/ different to others you have read by the same author?

YEAR 6



Clarify vocabulary	• Find words and phrases which show/tell you about ... • Can you put this word in a different sentence? • Why is the word ___ in inverted commas? • What other words or phrases could the author have used?
Retrieve	• What is...? Why had...? Who else...? What event...? Why do...? Where...? • What evidence is there that this was written for...? • How does the writer show they had mixed feelings about...? Support your child to use the layout features (contents, index, glossary, sub-headings, diagrams) to find information.
Summarise	• Which section of the text tells readers about... • Sum up each section / paragraph/ character in a word/ sentence. • Skim this text and explain what it is about. • Scan the text for e.g. dates/character names/setting names etc using numbers and capital letters to guide.
Infer	• Use every opportunity to ask your child to back up how they know in answer to your question. Encourage them to refer to the text to support their opinion. • What impressions do you get of ___? • Fact or opinion? • How can you tell that (character) was determined to .....? • Give two reasons why he does/doesn't want.....
Predict	• Use the cover/ blurb/ inside cover/ chapter name/ sub-heading to predict what is happening now/ before/ next? • How might characters change throughout this story? • Is the character/ story/ theme/ style similar to any other books you have read/ films you have seen? Discuss.
Structure and organisation	• How did he/she deal with their difficulties? Do you agree with the way the problem was solved? Would you do the same? Explain. • Were there any clues that... would happen? • What is the purpose of the text? How do you know?
Language choice	• Find words/ phrases which make the passage seem... • Which words point to the purpose of the text? • Which words tell us it was written a long time ago? •Which bit of the text did you find funny? Why?
Making comparisons	• Choose two characters or settings and think about how they are similar or different. • How did the characters' reactions differ/ mood change when...? • Who is your favourite author? Discuss their various books and how they are similar/ different.

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