

BES Tiger Tracks

Help Your Child Understand What He or She Reads

By: Colorín Colorado (2007)

When children get to fourth grade, they no longer spend time in class learning how to read. Instead, they learn about science, social studies, and many other subjects. They read in order to understand.

Explain things

Explain to your child how things work and what things are. Talk about music, politics, sports, history, or whatever interests you both. Conversations with adults help children build understanding.

Ask questions

Ask questions that make your child think about what he or she just read. Say something like, "Why do you think he did that?" or "What's happening now?"

Show your child new people, places, and things

Give your child new experiences as much as possible. Take him or her along with you to meet new people, go to different places, and see new things. Talk about what you see and do. Open up your child's experiences so he or she can draw on that knowledge when reading.

Talk about different word meanings

Play games with words. You can talk about how jam means something you put on toast as well as cars stuck in traffic. How many other words can your child think of that sound the same but have different meanings and spelling? When kids know what a word means, they have less difficulty when reading it.

Use a children's dictionary

Buy or borrow a children's dictionary. Show your child how to use it to look up the meaning of words. If you have access to the Internet, your child can also go to a [talking dictionary](#) to hear how a word is pronounced (in English).

Teach your child comprehension tricks

Show your child some tricks to better understand what he or she has seen or read. Four of these tricks are: summarize, predict, context, and monitor. Try these with your child with a TV show or sports game first. Then try it with a book. For example:

- Ask your child to retell a story in just a few sentences (summarize).
- Ask him or her to guess what might happen next (predict).
- Show your child how to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word based on other words and pictures around it (context).
- Explain how to pause while reading in order to ask himself or herself whether he or she knows what is happening, and if not, to re-read the sentence again (monitor).

Knowing how to do these things will help your child better understand what he or she reads!

Read together every day

Read with your child for at least 15 minutes each day. Experts say this is one of the most important things you can do! Make reading together a warm and loving time.