



Reading Literature: Getting Started with Preschool Reading Comprehension

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Foundational skills in reading are not limited to phonics and fluency. An important thing to start with on your preschool aged child's literacy journey is reading comprehension—understanding stories. Being able to make predictions, ask and answer questions, and retell plot elements are essential to a child's academic growth starting in preschool and beyond.

At this age most children are experiencing texts by listening to a book being read aloud, a parent or teacher reading to a child every day without fail has an immense impact on their motivation to become readers for themselves. Certified teachers often follow these general steps when reading with preschool children to meet learning standards tailored to their grade level expectations using a “before, during, and after reading” model:

FIND THE TITLE!

Look at the pictures of books below. Put a check next to the books that have titles.

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Before Reading

The first step when teaching reading comprehension to a preschool-aged child is to give them the opportunity to choose a book—or several books—they would enjoy having read to them. This can be done by taking them to browse at the local library or even the local department store. Direct them toward books for their age. At this level, kids should be exposed to books with no more than 5 lines of text on a page, and large, vivid pictures. The text itself can be rich and descriptive, because they are not expected to read through it on their own. Rather, they are experiencing it through the adult’s fluent reading expression. Then, choose a comfortable spot together that allows you to enjoy the story.

Make it a go-to spot that you always use for reading together. This will establish a routine and help with motivation and focus.

Next, you'll begin exploring the book a little bit before reading by examining the front and back covers, and talking about the title. Discuss how the writer of the story is called an author and the artist who makes the pictures is called an illustrator. Make some predictions about words the author may have used or what might happen in the story. Ask them if they think this is a story that could really happen or if it is a fantasy where animals are talking. Share your predictions and let them share theirs with you.

During Reading

During reading of the text, model fluency and expression with your voice. Notice whether the text is rhyming or not and point it out to your preschooler. If certain phrases are repeated throughout the story, have them join in and say those with you to make it fun and engaging. This will also encourage your preschooler to begin listening for patterns. As the story goes along, make another prediction about where its all headed and what clues there are. Also pay attention to characters thoughts and feelings. After reading a page or two, stop and ask questions like "What did we just read?" and "Can you tell me what just happened to ____?".

Remind your child of details they may leave out or may not have noticed by turning back to a page and rereading or looking at the illustrations again. This models the essential skill of using text evidence to support answers later in their literacy journey.

Pictures in a Picture Book
Look at the pictures from this picture book. Listen to the sentences below each picture and check the one that matches what's happening in the picture.

The boy walks his dog.

The boy plays in the sand.

The girl jumps rope.

The girl rides her bike.

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After Reading

There are lots and lots of ways to reinforce the reading of a text after you have finished it, but for this age group some of the most impactful ways to work on reading comprehension skills are simple and practical. Remember, you are building foundational skills now to set your child up for a solid reading and response ability in the grades to come. Keeping things concrete and seemingly effortless now will ready them for what comes in Kindergarten. Once you close the book, talk with your child about whether they liked it, and what they liked most. Encourage them to describe why they feel that way.

Making Connections

Making connections is a necessary skill for reading comprehension. Within this lesson model, teachers typically talk with children about text-to-self connections, text-to-text connections, and text-to-world connections. Text-to-self connections are about relating an element of the story to an experience they have had personally. For example, in the Very Hungry Caterpillar, the main character eats a lot of snacks and treats that perhaps your child also enjoys eating. Find some way that a character is like them and talk about it. In text-to-text connections, kids are encouraged to relate the story they have just heard with another story they know—whether it be from a book or a tv show or movie. For example, maybe just like in the Very Hungry Caterpillar, they watched a show where the

main character got a tummy ache from too much junk food. And finally a text-to-world connection means just that—it is not relating to a personal experience but about something they know about in the world. For example, if they story is about a holiday, perhaps your community throws a parade to celebrate that holiday every year. If the illustrations show an American Flag, perhaps your child could mention where else they see flags flying.

**Walk in the Woods:
Finding the Connection**

Listen to the story about a **brother** and **sister's** walk through the woods. What do their walks have in common? Check the things that both brother and sister see in the woods.

A brother took a walk in the woods. He saw so many things. The brother saw **trees** . The brother saw a **squirrel** . The brother saw a **hare** . The brother went home.

The next day his sister took a walk through the woods. The sister saw **trees** . The sister saw a **squirrel** . The sister saw a **deer** . The sister went home.

trees

hare

squirrel

deer

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Retelling Plot Elements

At this developmental stage, working on describing the main pieces that make the story are the vest to focus on. In preschool this is done through conversation rather than written work. For example, you might ask your child to name the characters in the story and give a descriptive detail about them. Another important plot piece to identify is the setting of the story—both the time of day or year, and the place or places. It is very important for children at the preschool level to articulate that a story they just listened to that was all about a snowball fight was in fact happening in the winter. Once the story details have been discussed as far as characters and setting, children should be asked to identify events from the beginning, middle and end of the read-aloud. A good strategy for this is to look back through the text with them. Look at pages 1-2, pages 9-10, and the last page. Obviously if the book isn't 20 pages long, it will be up to you to decide where

the 'middle' is. Have the child retell what they remember happening on those pages and emphasize that they are telling the beginning, middle, and end so they become familiar with that terminology.

Parts of a Story			KIDS ACADEMY
Check the settings.	Check the characters.	Check the feelings.	
 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	
 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	
 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	
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Summary

This article has given you a good amount of suggestions about how to help your preschool-aged child with reading comprehension skills. To summarize the list of things mentioned, here is a list of bullet points:

Before Reading

- Choose an appropriate book
- Look at the title and the front and back covers of the book
- Make predictions

During Reading

- Read with expression
- Notice any patterns

- Review some of the pages after they've been read to check for understanding

After Reading

- Make connections
- Retell plot elements like characters, setting, and beginning, middle, end
- Use resources from Kids Academy to reinforce comprehension skills. Find those here:

[Videos for Comprehension Practice](#), and here: [Reading Comprehension Worksheets for Preschool](#)

We at Kids Academy hope that these ideas will help start your preschooler on their journey to a rich and enjoyable journey with books! Let us know about your experiences trying these methods in the comment section below!

