

# What Can I Do to Help My Child Become a Successful Reader?

There are four main strands that make up reading: Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expanding Vocabulary. To be successful at reading students need to find strength in all four. At this point in time, your child's reading goal is **Comprehension**.

Comprehension refers to understanding what you are reading. It is not only remembering the main idea, but the details that support it. Students who need help with comprehension need to read with an adult and read often.

Reading to someone will benefit him or her more if both participants are actively involved in the process.

We work on many strategies in class to help your child progress in their comprehension, and you can use some of them at home as well. Right now your child knows that comprehension is their goal. They can articulate to you what the strategies below mean and how they should be used.

1) **Check for understanding:** If a child is reading a picture book, have them read a page then stop at the end and retell what they read about before going on. If they can retell most of the details, they may continue reading. If not, they must reread. A chapter book can be broken up by paragraphs.

2) **Back up and Reread:** As a child reads and comes to a word they don't know, have them figure it out then go back to the beginning of the sentence the word was in and reread it. Sometimes students spend a long time decoding a word and forget what the sentence was about, which can impede their comprehension.

3) Many times very fluent readers lack comprehension because they read too quickly and sometimes substitute unknown words for what they think is right. Helping children slow down and spend time figuring out the correct word will ultimately help sharpen the picture in their mind of what is happening in the story.

4) **Make a picture or mental image:** This can be done after a child reads a small selection of text. The key to help students progress in their comprehension is to break the text into small increments. Once they train themselves to stop and visualize often, they can read for longer periods and do this naturally. Students could draw what they read or describe to you verbally what they saw in their mind. I tell them to think about the story as if it were a movie.

5) **Compare and contrast:** After a child reads a selection they should be comparing and contrasting what they read. This could be between characters, chapters, different stories of the same genre/author. They could write them down using a Venn Diagram (two interwoven circles) or verbalize them.

6) **Asking Questions:** Students who struggle with comprehension also struggle with monitoring their reading. Good readers constantly ask questions before, during, and after reading. We tend to ask children questions about reading only after the reading is done. To help train children to constantly monitor themselves, questions should be asked throughout reading.

7) **Making predictions:** Children should also be making predictions on what will happen next, how a character might change, what a character might do, etc. Their predictions should make sense with the details given in a story. They may need prompting to do this at first, but should come naturally with time.

8) **Recognize cause and effect relationships:** "Why" questions are difficult for children to answer in the early grades. They expect to have a black and white answer to every question, but when it comes to a character's intent or reasons for doing things, they can become stumped. They must identify clues in the text to help them formulate a cause for something happening or a possible outcome. Asking children questions like, "Why do you think that happened?" and "What happened as a result of..." and even "How would the outcome be different if the character would've..." will help them gain a deeper understanding of the text.

9) **Using text features (titles, headings, captions, graphic features):** This is mostly true with text other than fiction: nonfiction, magazines, articles, etc.

# What Can I Do to Help My Child Become a Successful Reader?

There are four main strands that make up reading: Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expanding Vocabulary. To be successful at reading students need to find strength in all four.

At this point in time, your child's reading goal is **Accuracy**.

Accuracy refers being able to read the words. Children who struggle with accuracy usually struggle with comprehension as well because not being able to read the text makes it difficult to understand it. Most children spend so much time decoding words that they cannot enjoy what they are reading, thus causing a negative attitude toward reading in general. Patience is key with the accuracy child. Do not rush to give them the word when they do not know it. Have them use what they know to help them decode. It's hard to let go of that control, but it is crucial to helping these children become independent readers.

We work on many strategies in class to help your child progress in their accuracy, and you can use some of them at home as well. Right now your child knows that accuracy is their goal. They can or will be able to articulate to you what the strategies below mean and how they should be used.

1) **Cross-checking (Do the pictures and/or words look right? Do they sound right? Do they make sense?):** This three-fold strategy trains children to stop on words they do not know but replace. Some children who struggle with accuracy 'run over' the words they do not know, replacing it with either sounds, nonsense words, or a different word altogether. Cross checking helps students become more active in their reading. If they realize what they are saying does not make sense, then it helps their comprehension. We practice this strategy by making three movements for each question: Do the pictures/words look right (right hand to left shoulder); Do the words sound right (left hand to right shoulder); Do they make sense (both hands onto legs).

2) **Flip the sound:** Students should know at this point that the English language is made up of a variety of sounds. There are short vowels, long vowels, soft c and g, hard c and g, consonant blends, vowel blends, digraphs, etc. So when children come to a word they do not know, one of the decoding strategies they can use is flipping the sound of a letter. So if a child gets to the word 'blade' and says 'blad', remind them to flip the sound to a long vowel. Same with soft c ('s' sound) and soft g ('j' sound). Sometimes this step is all they need to decode a word because many children struggling with accuracy struggle with distinguishing between short/long vowel sounds (which is what our word work is helping strengthen).

3) **Chunk letters and sounds:** The secret with chunking letters and sounds is looking for them. Children often times don't 'see' the chunks like we do; this is a learned reading behavior. So breaking a word up like "shack" would be sh-a-ck. An accurate reader would know that the 'sh' makes one sound, the 'a' can make two sounds, and the 'ck' makes one sound. It could even be prefixes or suffixes such as -ing or -ed. Reminding children of these rules will strengthen a child's ability to decode words independently.

4) **Stretch and Reread:** This strategy kind of blends with number 3, but in this case students specifically say each sound slowly then read it quickly as one word. We illustrate this by using a rubber band.

5) **Look for words within words:** Children struggling with accuracy never scan a word they are struggling with, they always start at the first letter of the word and try to figure it out from there. Have them look at the word from beginning to end and see if there are smaller words they already know within the word. For instance, 'begin' has the word 'in' at the end and 'beg' at the beginning.

6) **Back up and reread:** This strategy is also a comprehension strategy, but I always use it with my accuracy students. Once children figure out a word they must go back to the beginning of the sentence and reread it. Sometimes children spend so long figuring out a word that they forget what it was about in the first place. Again, helping build that comprehension in conjunction with the accuracy.

7) **Use the picture:** Children working on building their accuracy need to be reading picture books. Pictures serve as clues to help children decode words. Is the word they are saying match what is happening in the picture? Does it make sense with the illustration?

8) **Reread!!** One thing that accuracy children struggle with in reading is confidence. They know they are struggling and their opinion about reading is usually reflective of that feeling. Having student reread a familiar text three or four times will help build their confidence because they become more familiar with the words and are in turn able to read it more fluently. A lot of parents have asked me if that just causes them to memorize, and it might, but as long as you are changing out the book every few reads, that is okay. You could also do this with a few pages at a time. Once a child's confidence is given a boost, he/she is more likely to try hard and be more motivated with a new text.

# What Can I Do to Help My Child Become a Successful Reader?

There are four main strands that make up reading: Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expanding Vocabulary. To be successful at reading students need to find strength in all four.

At this point in time, your child's reading goal is **Fluency**.

Fluency refers to knowing the words, understanding what is read, reading in a way that sounds natural and fluid. I usually tell them it's like reading the same way you would talk to someone. It involves appropriate timing (not too fast...it's not a race), expression when reading out loud, and consistency.

We work on many strategies in class to help your child progress in their fluency, and you can use some of them at home as well. Right now your child knows that comprehension is their goal. They can articulate to you what the strategies below mean and how they should be used.

1) **Reading good-fit books:** This sounds like a given, but believe it or not many children do not know how to choose good books for themselves. In class we use IPICK, which includes the 5-finger rule. Your child can explain this to you, but they should be choosing books using these methods. If children are reading books that are too difficult, they are focusing on accuracy, not fluency.

2) **Voracious reading:** Oh yes, your child knows what this means! Fluency children must read A LOT and they must read out loud. Also, if your child is used to pointing to the words with their finger, discourage it. It was good when they were working on accuracy, but it will slow their fluency down.

3) **Adjust reading rates to match text:** Many fluency readers are not aware that good readers adjust their reading rate based on what it is they are reading. Many times they do not even notice when we pause between sentence or paragraphs. We describe the different reading rates as shifting gears, like in a car:

first gear: slowest, used to memorize material

second gear: slow, used to learn material

third gear: most of our reading is at this rate

fourth gear: quickest speed—for skimming and scanning

4) **Reread text:** Since the fluency reader's goal is to read and adjust rates appropriately, rereading a familiar text could help children gain confidence, although it should be limited to a few times before moving on to another text.

5) **Attending to punctuation:** Many children have fluency as a goal because they run right through punctuation causing their reading to sound like one huge run-on sentence. Going back to adjusting reading rate, good readers know that there are very slight pauses after ending punctuation and commas. They also know that the voice changes when reading a question rather than a statement. Also, when a character begins to speak or engage in dialogue with other characters, the voice should reflect that change by adjusting not only their expression, but their reading rate as well.

6) **Use appropriate expression:** As children begin to explore intonation they should be thinking about what the characters are feeling/thinking during the part they are reading. If two or more characters are involved, there should be a difference in the voice when reading aloud. When the characters are different ages, genders, have different personalities, all of this should be taken into account when reading aloud.

7) **Read to your child:** One of the best things you can do for a child struggling with fluency is read to them while they are watching the words. Many fluency children are still reading word by word because they are used to it, so training their eyes to move quicker over the words will help them tremendously.

# What Can I Do to Help My Child Become a Successful Reader?

There are four main strands that make up reading: Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expanding Vocabulary. To be successful at reading students need to find strength in all four.

At this point in time, your child's reading goal is **Expanding Vocabulary**.

Expanding vocabulary refers to increasing the words your child is learning on a daily basis. The expanding vocabulary child is a competent, independent reader with strong fluency and comprehension. These students sometimes get left out because they are already pretty self-sufficient, but we do not want them to stagnate in their reading. We want to challenge them because there is always room to improve.

We work on many strategies in class to help your child progress in their vocabulary building, and you can use some of them at home as well. Right now your child knows that expanding vocabulary is their goal. They can articulate to you what the strategies below mean and how they should be used.

**1) Tune in to interesting words:** In my class children that are working on increasing their vocabulary are always on the hunt for new, interesting words in their reading. They have individual word walls in their binder that they use to record the words they find, and throughout the year they will be able to dissect these words to gain a deeper understanding of them. During their read to self time I provide them with a sticky note so they can write down interesting words they find without getting up and interrupting their reading. They can do the same thing at home during their 20-minute reading time.

**2) Read voraciously:** Yes, your child knows what voracious means! Children trying to increase their vocabulary should be reading challenging books often. They should be deep into chapter books that begin to explore conflicting emotions, real life issues, and figurative language.

**3) Use dictionaries, thesauruses, and glossaries:** At home these are great resources to have handy. Thesauruses are great tools to help expand a child's vocabulary. Children could also look use online versions of these tools (I don't know what it is, but using technology for the same purpose is always more interesting to them!).

**4) Using word parts to determine the meaning of words:** Successful readers are usually successful spellers. They know that words are usually made up of chunks that sometimes give clues to what words mean (prefixes/suffixes). Sometimes making word webs or lists using these patterns can help train them to break up more difficult words.