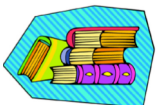
Parents in the Know

Focus on Reading

Finding Books



The best place to find books is your local library. They have thousands of books you can check out for free. However, if you are looking to purchase some children's books cheaply, some places to look include: library book sales, garage sales, thrift stores, websites like Amazon.com and Half.com, or through Scholastic books through your child's school.

Phonics Rules

You've probably heard the phonics rule "i before e except after c". However, did you know:

C comes before a, o, and u (ex. cat, cot, cut)
K comes before i and e (ex. kite, key)

When w is before "or", the "or" says "er" (ex. word, work)

You use "oi" at the beginning and middle of a word and "oy" at the end of a word (ex. oil, boy)

When a one-syllable word has a short vowel sound followed by the "f", "l", or "s" sound, you usually double those letters (ex. puff, dull, boss)

Comprehension Techniques

Your child can practice at home many of the comprehension techniques she is learning at school.

Before reading:
Look at the cover and identify whatever information you can about the characters and setting.
Predict what you think the story is going to be about.
Think about what you already know about the topic or characters.

During reading:
Visualize: Make a picture in your mind of what you are reading.
Connect: Make connections with things you have already read and experiences you have had.
Predict: Think about what you think will happen next.

After reading:
Review what happened and what you learned.
Identify any questions you might have.
Check if your predictions were correct.

What Research Says

Reading comprehension is clearly important. Little is gained from reading something you don't understand. Research has shown that there are specific strategies good readers use. They include: previewing, self-questioning, making connections, visualizing, knowing how words work, monitoring, summarizing, and evaluating. All of these skills can be effectively taught to increase student understanding and achievement.

Based on: "Research Based Reading Comprehension Instruction: Focus on Reading Strategies", http://www.perfectionlearning.com/images/products/pdfs/fors/fors.whitepaper.pdf

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Reading

Meet Michael Dahl

Michael Dahl has written over 100 books for children and young adults. He has won the AEP Distinguished Achievement Award three times for his work. Michael writes a wide variety of books from joke books to mystery novels. Michael is also the author of a large series called "Word Fun". It teaches children about grammar.

If You Were an Adverb
If You Were a Noun
If You Were a Verb

You get the idea!

Helping with Spelling

You don't need to be a great speller to help your child become one. There are many fun things you can do at home to help your child.

* Play word games such as Scrabble and Boggle
* Encourage your child to read daily
* Help your child "sound words out"
* Review what your child is learning in phonics at home
* Practice your child's spelling words
* Give your child a special notebook to write stories in and give your child a "special" pen to edit her work whenever she wants. This will provide you an opportunity to discuss words that she gets wrong.

Improving Comprehension

Comprehension is understanding what was read. If a child can read words but does not understand what is being read, it is really just word calling. The reading has no meaning to the child. So, it is important that you check your child's comprehension as he reads.

One thing you can do is teach your child to **question** himself while reading. For example:

Who are the main characters?
What is the problem?
What is going on?

Also, encourage your child to **predict** what he thinks is going to happen next. When you are reading with your child you can model making predictions with your child and checking if you are correct. Good readers are always predicting and revising their predictions based on what is read.

Good readers are able to **summarize** and **retell** what was read. So, ask your child to tell you about what he reads each day.

Book Corner

Spotlight on Caldecott

Caldecott Books are picture books recognized for their excellence in illustration. Some recent winners include:

A Sick Day for Amos McGee, by Philip Stead and Erin Stead
Interrupting Chicken, by David Ezra Stein
A River of Words, by Jen Bryant and Melissa Sweet

"There is no substitute for books in the life of a child."
May Ellen Chase

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