

Comprehension

It is important to teach and model comprehension in Year 2. Comprehension begins to develop long before children learn to read, largely from listening to and talking about stories and other literature. Once children can read fluently, they are able to start to develop their comprehension of texts they read for themselves – they are more able to focus on meaning once they no longer have to focus so hard on decoding.

The more children read, the more their comprehension will develop – so comprehension is boosted by reading widely across a range of topics, including both levelled books and free-choice reading for pleasure. Children also benefit from listening to books read aloud to them, as intonation plays an important part in conveying meaning. Reading widely extends children's knowledge of the world and of how language works, as well as enhancing their vocabulary – both of which have a direct effect on how much children understand.



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Here are some tips to help you teach comprehension at Year 2.

- As the Reading Framework says, *comprehension is an outcome, not a skill to practice* – so focus on helping children create a mental model of the text as they read. A mental model is the understanding that we all bring to the text as skilled readers, often without even thinking about it. For young children, it needs to be modelled explicitly, by thinking aloud as you read and involving children in the process. For example, explain out loud when you link an idea in the book to your prior knowledge, and model how to work out the meanings of unknown words. For example, “Why is Daisy worried about going to the carnival? I know that carnivals are very crowded with lots and lots of people. Perhaps Daisy is worried she might get lost there?” or “What does **creation** mean? What word do we know that starts the same way?”
- It’s worth reminding children that good readers change their mental models all the time as they read – it’s not about getting it ‘right’ at the start of the book and then sticking to your original ideas. Through modelling, you can show them how you change your mind, for instance by sense-checking initial assumptions and reacting to new clues and information as they crop up in the text. For example, “What new information have we just learned about Amit? Does this change what we thought at the beginning?”
- Sometimes it’s helpful to teach specific comprehension strategies such as predicting, visualizing or summarising – for example, to help children who are struggling to use these strategies in their reading. The Reading Framework advises keeping this teaching specific and time-limited, and always link it back to creating a mental model of the text as you read. This should help children see that you use comprehension strategies all the time when you’re reading, and that you use them all together, not one by one. Bug Club Guided Reading sessions are an ideal time to teach these strategies as well as encourage children to try out your mental models for themselves.
- You can support comprehension by introducing books carefully before children start reading – for instance, explaining the background, supplying any essential context or knowledge that’s needed, and explaining any key vocabulary that might be unfamiliar. This helps children begin to construct a mental model of the text for themselves as they read.
- Regular interactive quiz questions in the Bug Club eBooks help to ensure children are developing their own mental models as they read, prompting them to think about the texts.