



Reading comprehension skills

Comprehension questions test how well your child understands texts that are read, listened to or viewed. These key skills will help your child answer comprehension questions.

Key comprehension skills

Skill	Description	Example
getting the main idea	The main idea is what the passage is about. In paragraphs, it is often contained in the first sentence. In longer passages, the main idea may be in the title, chapter headings, proposed solutions to problems or in concluding statements.	<p><i>Jupiter is the largest planet in our solar system with a diameter of approximately 142,000km, which is 11 times that of the Earth's diameter. Saturn is the second largest planet with a diameter of 120,00km. Uranus is the third and Neptune the fourth largest planets, with diameters of 51,000km and 49,500km respectively. The Earth and Venus are similar in size with diameters of approximately 13,000km.</i></p> <p>Main idea: The relative size of planets in our solar system.</p>
identifying cause and effect	Cause and effect is about how events relate to one another. Words which indicate this are: <i>because, as a result, due to</i> .	<p><i>It rained heavily for three days (cause) and as a result the river burst its banks (effect).</i></p>
identifying fact and opinion	Facts can be verified from other sources. Opinions are personal judgements and are often expressed by comparisons (strongest, best) or adjectives (brilliant, untrustworthy).	<p><i>Monet was the founder of French impressionist painting (fact).</i></p> <p><i>Monet was the most brilliant artist of his time (opinion).</i></p>
making inference	Information is not clearly stated but is implied by the context.	<p><i>He grabbed his raincoat and umbrella and ran from the house.</i></p> <p>The inference is that it is raining or it might rain.</p>

<p>comparing and contrasting</p>	<p>Comparing focuses on similarities: <i>similarly, likewise, just as, in the same way, both.</i></p> <p>Contrasting focuses on differences: <i>on the other hand, however, conversely, yet, nevertheless, although.</i></p> <p>Note: For both we may need to draw on what we already know.</p>	<p><i>Just as</i> weeds are seen to spring up everywhere in the summer, in the same way trees and plants put on growth spurts. (comparing)</p> <p><i>In summer, the temperatures are warmer and plants grow rapidly. On the other hand, winter is cold and plants grow more slowly. (contrasting)</i></p>
<p>sequencing</p>	<p>To understand and follow a passage well, the reader needs to know the order in which things happened. Examples of words which indicate sequence are: <i>first, then, finally, at last.</i></p>	<p><i>First he raced into the room, frantically searching for his sports shoes. When at last he had found them under the bed, he ran to the car, leapt in and was finally on his way to school.</i></p>
<p>drawing conclusions</p>	<p>The aim is to consider all that has been said and interpret what it is about. This may include a summary statement at the end or the author's point of view throughout a passage.</p>	<p><i>Some people keep injured birds they find in the wild. They take them home, look after them and then keep the birds on as pets. But is it good for wild birds to be kept in a cage all the time? Once the birds are strong enough, trained wildlife experts recommend that birds raised in the wild be introduced back into their natural habitat.</i></p> <p>Conclusion: Wild birds live best in their natural environment.</p>