

# Sedlescombe Primary's Guide to: Developing Children's Comprehension

## Reading Comprehension:

Reading Comprehension is so much more than answering and asking questions. We should aim to build children's understanding of what they are reading and at home, we can do this in lots of different ways.



## What can we do at home?

-**Taking part in 'Book Chat'** when reading, to help children build a mental model of what they are reading. Please see overleaf for support with this.

-**Discuss new vocabulary** with your child. You could define the word and most importantly, put it into a context.

**Example:** 'The ground was **treacherous** as they headed up the mountain.'

"Treacherous means a situation that have hidden or unpredictable dangers. I could say the road to school was treacherous when the car hit the pothole. It was filled with water so we didn't see the danger! Can you think of another way of using the word treacherous?"

-**Find images** of unfamiliar words, scenes or scenarios. Once the image is shown, allow time to discuss it and think about what that means for the text.

**Example:** Crop circles were mentioned in an age-appropriate children's text. Pictures of crop circles could be shown so the child has a visual understanding of what they look like.

-Use **appropriate videos** to aid further understanding of the text.

**Example:** Finding videos of desert islands to support a text with this location will further help a child to build a mental representation of the setting.



-Allow children **time to react to the text** as it progresses. They could discuss their thoughts and opinions throughout or they could have time to jot them down. They could write a list of questions they wish to ask.

-Encourage children to **make links** to other texts that they've read, films they've seen, places they've been or experiences that they've had.

**Example:** "What other story had a character that travelled through a portal to another world?"

## What is Book Chat?

Book Chat develops language, comprehension and pleasure. It encourages readers to discuss a text and share their opinions using open questions, comments and prompts. Children love to hear your opinions too.



## Top Tips to Prompt Book Chat:

Watch and listen carefully to follow their interests

**Observe and respond:** Pay attention to what captures your child's attention and build on their interests, for example, 'Oh, you've spotted the...!'.  
**Leave pauses:** So they can look closely and think, this will lead to comments on the pictures or questions. Respond to their lead and let the book chat flow.

Invite your child to get involved

**Pose questions:** Open questions encourage thinking and discussion, such as, 'How do you think the boy is feeling?'. Try to avoid closed questions, such as 'What colour is that?'; these have a single answer and don't keep the conversation going.  
**Draw attention to illustrations:** Encourage your child to notice details in the pictures and think what they might mean, for example, 'Look! What's that hiding, what do you think it might be?'.  
**Ponder and wonder:** Encourage your child to think about what might happen, using phrases such as, 'I wonder if/ whether /who/ why/ what ...'.  
**Make personal connections:** Picture storybooks not only allow children to empathise with the experiences of fictional characters but enable them to make sense of events in their own lives. Talk about connections, for example, 'That reminds me of when...'.  
**Comment on your feelings:** By sharing your emotional response to a character or something that's happened you encourage your child to do the same, helping them engage and learn to express their emotions.  
**Your combined pleasure counts:** Bring the story to life with facial expression, actions and sounds, encouraging your child to join in! Do offer information to help with unfamiliar words, such as 'That's the hencoop, it's where the hens live', but keep the focus on fun.

Wonder and connect to your lives

Share your emotional responses!

Keep it light and enjoyable!

To promote children's pleasure in reading and foster the habit, we need to read to children and with them and to talk to them about books. These conversations are crucial as they help children to engage and think deeply.