

How to Help Your Child Remember What They Read

Remembering what was read begins with understanding it while reading. If a child reaches the end of a page and cannot explain the main idea, asking the child to reread the entire assignment repeatedly may add time without fixing the point where meaning was lost. Work in short sections. Before reading, briefly activate what the child already knows about the topic. During reading, stop after a manageable section and ask for the gist in the child's own words. After reading, ask the child to retrieve the important idea without looking first, then return to the text to check accuracy. The What Works Clearinghouse recommends explicit comprehension strategies, including questioning, summarizing or retelling, monitoring understanding, and using text structure to make sense of what is read.¹ IES materials specifically note that summarizing or retelling helps students think about and remember what they read, and that questioning can direct attention to important ideas.² For older readers, IES guidance recommends building word and world knowledge, asking and answering questions, determining the gist of short sections, and monitoring comprehension.³ At home, keep the process active but brief. Do not turn every page into an interrogation. Choose one or two prompts: "What is the most important thing here?" "What detail proves that?" or "What changed from the beginning to the end?" Then ask your child to give a short oral summary, draw a quick diagram, or write three key words from memory. If the child can read accurately but consistently cannot remember or explain age-appropriate material, save examples and discuss the pattern with the teacher. The goal is not perfect recall of every detail. It is helping the child identify important information, connect it to meaning, and retrieve it independently.

Did You Know?

- ✓ IES recommends teaching comprehension strategies such as questioning, summarizing, monitoring understanding, and using text structure.¹
- ✓ IES teaching materials explain that summarizing or retelling can help students think about and remember what they read.²
- ✓ For grades 4–9, the What Works Clearinghouse recommends determining the gist of short sections and monitoring comprehension as students read.³

Research Sources

[1. Institute of Education Sciences, What Works Clearinghouse. "Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade." Released September 2010.](#)

[2. Institute of Education Sciences, Regional Educational Laboratory. "Toolkit for Teaching K-3 Reading Comprehension."](#)

[3. Institute of Education Sciences, What Works Clearinghouse. "Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9." Released March 2022.](#)

Ten-Minute Read-Remember-Retrieve Check

Use this page with one short reading section. The goal is to remember the important idea and check it against the text.

Child's name: _____

Date: _____

Text or book: _____

Page(s): _____

1. Preview the Topic - About 2 Minutes

Ask what the child already knows and predict one thing the section may explain.

What I already know: _____

2. Read One Short Section - About 2 Minutes

Read a manageable section, then briefly close or cover the text.

Section or pages: _____

3. Retrieve the Gist - About 2 Minutes

Ask for the most important idea from memory before looking back.

The main idea I remember is: _____

4. Check the Text - About 2 Minutes

Return to the text and find one detail that confirms or corrects the memory.

Evidence from the text: _____

5. Make One Memory Cue - About 2 Minutes

Choose three key words, a tiny sketch, or one sentence as a memory cue.

My memory cue: _____