

MIRA Reading Comprehension Strategies for Early Elementary

Helping Your Child Become a More Confident, Supported Reader

Early elementary texts can be difficult for young readers because of new vocabulary, limited background knowledge, and decoding demands. Comprehension can feel tiring and discouraging for children who struggle to read. This handout provides practical strategies parents can use at home to support reading comprehension while building confidence and stamina.

What Makes Early-Elementary Reading Hard?

- Word Reading: decoding can take so much effort that little energy is left for understanding
- New Vocabulary: unfamiliar words can block the meaning of a whole page or story^{1,3}
- Background Knowledge Gaps: children may not know enough about the topic yet^{2,3}
- Memory Load: it can be hard to remember what happened across several pages
- Language Demands: some children understand more than they can explain out loud
- Often young readers struggle with thinking they do not understand when they just need shorter steps, more support, and repeated practice

Before Reading: Set Your Child Up for Success

(2-3 minute introductory routine can make a big difference)

- Preview the Book: look at the cover, pictures, headings, or bold words; talk briefly about what the text might be about¹
- Identify Purpose: Ask – are we reading to find out what happened, learn something new, or answer a question?
- Pre-teach Key Vocabulary: choose 2–3 important words from the text to explicitly teach^{1,3}
- Build Background Knowledge – briefly discuss the topic, show a photo or object, or watch a very short video^{2,3}
- Use a Graphic Organizer (like a simple story map or K-W-L chart) to create a visual roadmap, anchor information, and reduce overwhelm¹

During Reading: Keep Your Child Engaged

- Use Simple Talk-Back Prompts:
 - What happened?
 - Who is this about?
 - What did we just learn?
 - What do you think will happen next?
- Chunk the Text: Break reading into short sections; after each part ask – What was the main idea here? Or What happened first?²
- Picture or Oral Notes: Encourage short oral responses, pointing to pictures, or quick sketches like – This is the problem..., This is important..., This reminds me of...¹
- Audio Support: Read aloud to your child, echo read together, or let your child listen and follow along. This helps with focus, fluency, stamina, and understanding. This is a support, not a shortcut.

After Reading: Strengthen Understanding

- Summaries: ask for a simple retell – beginning, middle, end; or one sentence about what the text was mostly about
- Discussions: conversation deepens comprehension – Ask: What was the most important part? Or What did we learn? Or Why did that happen?
- Real-life Connections: help your child connect the text to real life through linking to family experiences, nature, play, or other books

Targeted Support for Struggling Readers

- Vocabulary Practice: review important words often; use picture cards, simple word webs, a personal word board, or create a word wall^{1,3}
- Fluency Support: read aloud together (take turns, echo read, repeated reading); use audio support; practice very short passages daily
- Working Memory Scaffolds: use visual organizers, break tasks into steps together, provide visual reminders (pictures)
- Decoding Refreshers: use short, separate practice (5–10 minutes a day)

Executive Function Supports

(Many children struggle more with organization than comprehension)

- Checklists: Preview book, Learn words, Read a little, Talk about it
- Timers: Read for 5–10 minutes, then take a short break
- Models of Finished Work: show examples of a completed story map, picture response, or oral retell
- Weekly goals: What is one strategy I want to practice using this week?

Tracking Progress

- Skill trackers: Have your child use simple check marks, stickers, or picture charts to notice growth
- Clear Success Targets: show what a fuller retell, stronger answer, or correct word use looks like
- Strategy Menus: Children can choose from a few support tools, building independence over time
- Weekly reflections: Short conversation – What helped me most this week? What felt easier? What is one goal for next week?

Encouragement Matters

Young children often feel frustrated when reading is hard. Remind them:

- Reading takes practice
- It is okay to need help
- Good readers stop, think, and try again
- Celebrate small wins

EARLY ELEMENTARY READING COMPREHENSION CHECKLIST

1. BEFORE READING

- Preview the book (cover, pictures, headings)
- Identify purpose for reading
- Review 2-3 key vocabulary words
- Build background knowledge (photo, object, short video, discussion)
- Select a graphic organizer that supports the purpose for reading

2. DURING READING

- Use simple talk-back prompts
- Pause after each section to check understanding
- Give oral responses, point to pictures, or draw quick notes
- Use read aloud or audio support if needed
- Chunk reading into manageable parts

3. AFTER READING

- Retell the story or section in simple words
- Discuss main idea or most important part
- Explain one detail that supports the idea
- Make connections to life, other books, or experiences
- Complete any assigned organizer or notes

4. TARGETED SKILL PRACTICE

- Vocabulary practice (pictures, word cards, word webs)
- Fluency practice (read-aloud, echo reading, audio pairing)
- Working memory supports (visuals, step-by-step tasks)
- Quick decoding refreshers if needed

5. EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SUPPORT

- Use a reading checklist or task list (pictures)
- Set a timer for focused intervals
- Show an example of what "finished" looks like
- Set weekly reading goals together

6. PROGRESS & REFLECTION

- Review a simple tracker or work samples
- Reflect on what helped most this week
- Celebrate small wins (effort, persistence, improvement)

Adapted from the following sources:

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