

COVID-19 READING COMPREHENSION GUIDANCE:

**TIPS FOR PARENTS &
CAREGIVERS**



**Prepared by:
Reading Comprehension Interest Group**



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ADAPTATION AND DISTRIBUTION TIPS FOR THIS RESOURCE:

This guidance should be adapted to the needs of your context, which may include:

Translating and (possibly) **simplifying the language** and/or reducing the number of examples



 Adding **illustrations** and/or changing the format to be more parent-friendly

Converting the essence of the guidance into **short audio skits** that could be played over the radio and/or distributed via SMS (perhaps through agreements between the Ministry of Education and local Telecoms and/or organizations like VIAMO that offer platforms for distributing pre-recorded messages)



 Converting the essence of the guidance into **short video skits** that could be shared over social media platforms and/or TV

Using the guidance to **develop specific questions** to be used with stories read aloud over the radio / TV / etc. In addition to the generic list of questions/guidance, you may want to consider developing specific questions for commonly known, local/cultural stories that **families could discuss together**.



 Distributing the guidance alongside any reading materials to be distributed with **food and other health distribution activities, following safe, social distancing and national health guidance**

TIPS FOR BUILDING READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS AT HOME¹

The following guidance is intended to be adapted by education practitioners into a format that would be relevant for parents/caregivers in your context. Note that we have included the name of the particular reading comprehension strategy in this version for practitioners, but you may want to simplify or eliminate those strategy names in the version you use with parents.

Examples for how to simplify/adapt this guidance are given towards the end of this document.

Parents, there are many things you can do to support your children's reading and writing development. You do not need special skills. All you need is a willingness to try once.



A. Read a book or narrate a story:

On the next page are questions you can ask and activities to do with your children, before, during, and after the reading/storytelling.

- Remember you can practice the following with a fictional story, non-fiction text, or even a poem!
- Only use 1-3 questions each for before, during and after you read. Choose questions that are appropriate for your child's level and interests.



[1] Some of this guidance was adapted from Save the Children's Literacy Boost Teacher Training module, which had adapted its guidance from Reading Rockets, http://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/thinkaloud_checklist.pdf (Reading Rocket's template was based on an activity in Schoenbach, R., Greenleaf, C. L., Cziko, C., Hurwitz, L. (2000). Reading for Understanding: A Guide to Improving Reading in Middle and High School Classrooms. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 78. Adapted by CAST <http://www.cast.org>). Other guidance was contributed by Reading Comprehension Interest Group members, and many Reading Comprehension Interest Group members provided feedback.

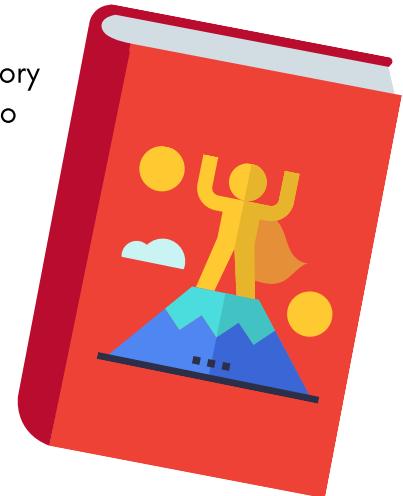


BEFORE READING OR TELLING YOUR STORY

- Activating background knowledge: From the title/pictures, I think this story might be about What do you know about? Yes, that's true. This also reminds me of...

Motivation:

- I want to read this story/poem/text because...
- What looks interesting to you in this story?
- Why do you want to read this story?
- Why do you think the author wrote this story?
- What do you think you will learn from this text? Is there something specific you hope to find out?
- Making Predictions: I notice in the title/picture, so I predict... What do you think will happen in this story?



Supporting vocabulary:

- For all children, especially younger children, tell children the meaning of difficult words that will appear in the story - ex.: "In this story, we are going to read about a / about a character who does ... What do you think is? That was an interesting guess, actually is
- For older children, ask your child to look through the text to identify words that are unfamiliar and discuss the meaning together: Which words are new to you? Which words seem difficult?
- If you do not know the meaning of the word, don't worry! Just tell your child that we always have new things to learn, and try to ask someone else in the family or on the phone who may know the meaning of the word.

Text structure / genre:

- Let's preview this book by looking through the pages. I can tell that this book is a ...[type / genre of book] ... because it has characteristics.
- Ex.**
 - I can tell that this book is a folk tale or an animal fiction story, because it has animals that talk.
 - I can tell that this book is a poetry book, because the words are written in short stanzas.
 - I can tell that this text is a biography, because it is telling the story of a real person and includes dates and facts.
 - I can tell that this text is an informational text, because it has real photos with captions, words in bold, and graphs.
- For older children:** What kind of story/text do you think this is? What clues from the text/story helped you find your answer?

DURING READING OR TELLING YOUR STORY



- **Making Predictions:** In the next part of the story, I think... I think this is... What do you think will happen next?
- **Making Connections:** This reminds me of... This is similar to... What does this remind you of?
- **Making Visualizations:** I see...I picture...
- **Making Inferences for understanding characters:** How do you think the character feels? How do you know?
- **Making inferences for understanding events:** Why did the event happen? Why do you think...?
- **Supporting Vocabulary:**
 - Talk about words in the text that may be unfamiliar to the children. Ask, "Do you know what --- means?"
- **Asking questions:** Why did...? What did...? How did...? Where was...? Should there...?
- **Clarifying/monitoring for meaning:**
 - **Modeling:** Hmm, I didn't understand that. I will re-read it to make sure I understand.
 - **Prompting:** Was there anything confusing in the text/story to you? Let's reread and discuss that section to better understand.
- **Cause/Effect:**
 - Why did ... happen? What event led to or caused it?
 - What might be the effect ...[event]? Or, what might happen now that[event] occurred?
 - What were the reasons for _____?
 - What were the results of _____?
- **Fact/Opinion:** The author made an interesting statement: Is that statement a fact or an opinion? How do you know?
- **Features of informational text:** Explain the key features of informational text to your child, such as how headings help to summarize key sections and how to read graphs and captions for images.
- **Compare/ Contrast (Similarities and Differences):**
 - How is [character's] action different from [other character's] actions?
 - How is this story similar to other stories you've read/heard?
 - How is this text different from the one we heard on the radio/TV/etc?

AFTER READING OR TELLING YOUR STORY



- **Sequencing:** Make/Distribute sentence strips with the words: "**In the beginning**", "**Next**", **and "Last"**". Have your child draw/write the main events of the story that was read, using the sentence strips and arrows or rope/sticks to show the order of events in the story.
 - If you do not have sentence strips, designate different places in your house to represent the beginning, middle and end of the story, and have your child move to each spot to describe the order of the events in the story.



- **Making Connections:** Did anything in this story remind you of someone you know? Did in the story seem similar to other stories you have read or situations you've heard about?

- **For informational texts -**

- Main Idea and Details:
 - What do you think was the main idea of this book /page /paragraph?
 - How do you know that is the main idea – what details from the story support that main idea?



- **Supporting Vocabulary:**

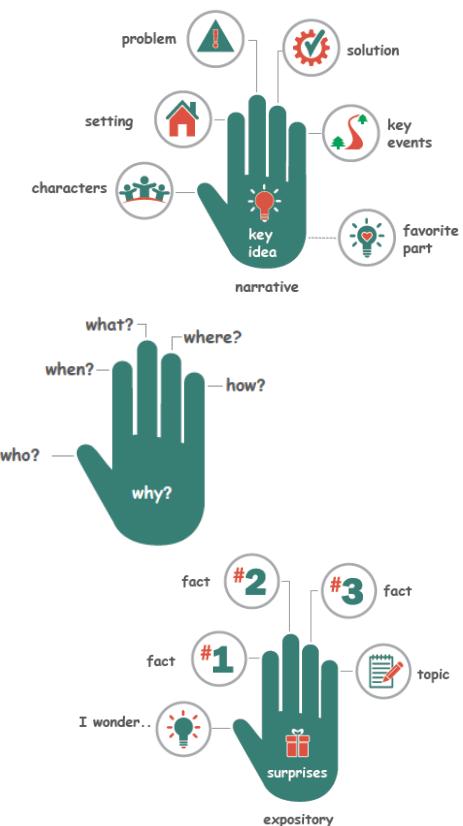
- Which words in the story were most interesting to you?
- Are there any words you would use in your own invented story?



After Reading or Telling your Story

- **5-finger retell - 3 variations :**

1. Use your hand to retell the story! Use one finger to tell the characters, one for the setting, one for the problem, solution, and one for key events. Parents can ask: How did _____ solve the problem? How did _____ reach his/her goal? Why do you think _____ wanted to _____?



2. Use one finger for each key detail of the story : Who was the story about? When did it happen? What happened? Where did it happen? How did it happen? (Palm: Why did it happen?)

3. (Informative text/non-fiction version) Use one finger for the main idea/topic, three fingers for key facts, and the final finger for questions about the topic.

- **Retell the story using key words:** Have your child retell the story using "Somebody _____ wanted _____ but, _____ So _____ Then _____"
- **Act it out:** Ask your children to put on a skit/play of the story
- **Illustrate:** Ask your children to draw/sketch the most important scenes in the story. They can draw in the dirt, on cardboard, or use pebbles and sticks or whatever is available in your home to make the images.
- **Evaluating:**
 - Did you like the story? Why or why not? What part of the story do you like the most?
 - Did the character make good choices? Why do you think so? Would you do the same thing or something different?
 - How is the life of the person in the text different from your life?
 - Was the process described in this text a good one? What would you have done differently?
 - (*For persuasive texts*): Do you agree with the author? Why or why not?
 - (*For informational texts*): What was the most interesting fact in the story?

[1] Barnes, A. & Paillangyo, A. (2019, July 17). Key early grade reading skills and strategies for effective instruction and assessment. [Webinar]. In Early Grade Reading Program Design and Implementation: Best Practices and Resources for Success Training Series. Prepared for USAID by University Research Co., LLC (URC) under the Reading within Reach (REACH) initiative. Contract No. xAID-OAA-M-14-00001, MOBIS#: GS-10F-0182T. Available at <https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/tools>



B. ORAL ACTIVITIES

Even if you are not confident about your own reading skills you can still build your child's skills. Try one of these activities:

Singing: Sing a song with your child and discuss the meaning of the words in the song. Ask your child to think of other words that sound similar to key words in the story (rhyming words, words that start with the same sound, etc).

For older children, repeat the song but replace key words in the song with new words that sound similar to the original words. See if your child can identify the new words. Then ask your child to try! Or, try and invent a new verse to the song together!

- *For cultures where people are not comfortable singing, replace this guidance with some similar cultural activity such as commonly known poems/rhymes/riddles etc.*



Mystery objects: Put 2-4 different child-safe objects in a bag/box.

Ask your child to – without looking – touch one of the objects and describe it (does it have edges? Is it hard or soft? Is it big or small? etc). Then see if your child can guess what the object is. Each child can take a turn describing and guessing!

For older children, use more objects and then use the objects (i.e. stick) as a key character or object in an invented story (ex. Long ago in a village like this one, there lived a small boy who had to pick up sticks every day...).

Take turns with your children so everyone gets to add their own invented sentences to the story. Your older children may be able to invent a story fully on their own; in this case, ask your children questions about their story and challenge them to create the most engaging story they can!

Guessing game: Play a visual guessing game with your children. Use words like “under, over, next to,” etc. to have your children guess the object you are thinking of!





B. ORAL ACTIVITIES (CONT)



Supporting your child to learn to give details for later writing activities:

Parent gives child a sentence that makes a general statement such as:

- We had fun today.
- My mother made my favorite food.
- My friend and I had a race.

After saying the sentence, the parent says, "***Tell me more.***" Then help to gather more details with questions.

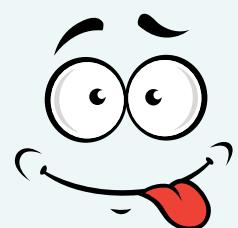
Ex: General Statement: We had fun today.

- Parent: What did you do?
- Child: John and I were jumping in puddles.
- Parent: What happened?
- Child: We splashed each other.
- Parent: Then what happened?
- Child: Our pants got wet.
- Parent: What did you do?
- Child: We were laughing.

- **Silly sentences:** To help your child learn to monitor for meaning, listen for words that do not make sense – ex.: Parent asks: "Is this a silly sentence?" (Replace verbs with adjectives, etc.). I have a run sweater.

Parent asks: What is silly? Could you draw that?

Let's fix it. Which word do you want to change? (You can't have a run sweater. You can have a red sweater.)



ADAPTED/SIMPLIFIED VERSION EXAMPLE 1

(Thanks to Rhoda Koenig [Creating Master Teachers] for this one!)

WAYS TO BUILD COMPREHENSION BY READING AND THINKING ALOUD FOR YOUR CHILDREN

Reading and thinking aloud introduces beginning readers to reading for meaning even before they can read for themselves. It is a sure way to prepare young children to have strong reading comprehension, which is why we read. Enjoy!

Invite your child to sit next to you while you read. (Make reading a time of joy and connection.)

Tell your child when you read this story you are also going to let him/her hear the things you do that help you to be a really good reader. (You want your child to see what readers do to build their understanding. You will say your thoughts first and if your child is ready to join in be sure to praise his/her good thinking. This read and think aloud is not the time for asking your child questions about the story.)



Say, Let's see what this story is going to be about. (Get ready to read by starting to anticipate and think.)

Ask the question, "What do I see on this cover?" (Gather information from the title and illustration on the cover. Tell how you are making connections between the title and the picture. Ask questions about what you want to know. Say what you guess the answers to your questions will be. Show how you take time to pay attention to all the details.)

Before opening the book to the first page, say what you think the story will be about and why you think that. Examples:

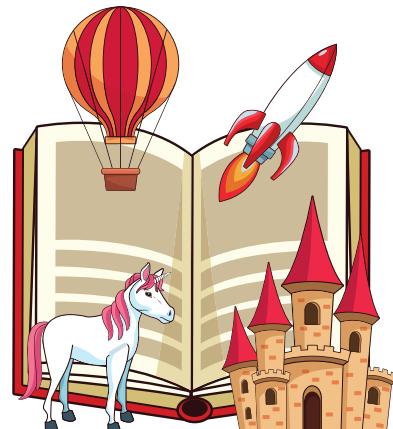
- I think this story will be about a little monkey that is lost.
- I think the story will take place in a jungle because the pictures on the cover show jungle animals.
- I'm wondering if the monkey will get help from the other animals so he can find his way home.
- My guess is he will get help because the animals look friendly.



TIPS FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

On each page, do the following:

1. **Observe the illustration first and say what you see and what you are thinking.**
2. **Read the words on the page aloud.** (Show how you stop to say what you are learning, predicting, wondering, figuring out, questioning, and comparing to things you know.)
3. **At the bottom of each page, say what you think will happen next and why. (Predict)**
4. **Say,** "Let's see. What has happened so far?" (Retell the events or the information -- a good way to check your understanding and help your memory.)



When you have finished the story say what it made you think about. (Getting the story's message)

After reading aloud and thinking aloud a few times, begin to ask your child for his or her reactions and thoughts. (Children usually can't wait to tell you what they are thinking as you are reading.) Ask questions if you need to, such as the following:

1. Ask your child to show you how a character acted. (**Visualize**)
2. Ask what the character's face probably looked like and what feelings that shows. (**Infer & visualize**)
3. Ask, "What do you want to find out?" (**Ask questions**)
4. Ask, "Did anything like what happened in the story ever happen to you?" (**Make connections** with our own lives, get new ideas to think about, raise questions we want to answer and gives us enjoyment.)



When reading and thinking aloud, it is not necessary to ask "test" questions. We want children to develop the habit of taking responsibility for making meaning when they read.

ADAPTED/SIMPLIFIED VERSION EXAMPLE 2



(Thanks to Christine Brodie [SILA] for this one!)

TIPS FOR BUILDING YOUR CHILDREN'S READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS AT HOME

BEFORE READING / TELLING:

Help children prepare their minds for the story by talking about:



1) The Cover of the Book

Read the title and talk about the cover picture. Ask children what they already know about the topic.

Example: For a book titled – The Hungry Dog – you might talk about what it means to be hungry, the different types of dogs in your location, what dogs do and eat, why people keep dogs, why the dog might be hungry, where he might find food.

- **Middle / Upper Primary Students** may be able to talk about other books or schoolwork they have completed that relates to the topic. **Example:** We talked about different kinds of animals in Science. Dogs will eat both meat and plant food.

2) The Pictures

As you look through the book, talk about what can be seen in each picture. This helps to introduce the ideas in the story / text.

Example questions to ask:

- Who or what is in the picture? What is happening?
- Is it in the same setting as the picture on the previous page?
- What might happen next?

TIPS FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

3) New or Difficult Words

As you look through the book, talk about any words that children may not understand. Give an example to show what the word means.

Example: "This word here says searching.

Do you know what a dog looks like when it's searching for something? Sometime we go searching for your shoes when we can't find them."

- **Middle / Upper Primary Students** may be able to point to words they don't know or think may be difficult to read.

4) The Type of Text

Ask children if they think the book will tell a story or give true information? What makes them think that?

DURING READING / TELLING:

1) Check for Understanding

It is good to check that children are remembering and understanding important events in the text, but don't ask so many questions that the story becomes disjointed. You can always ask more questions when you have finished reading the text.

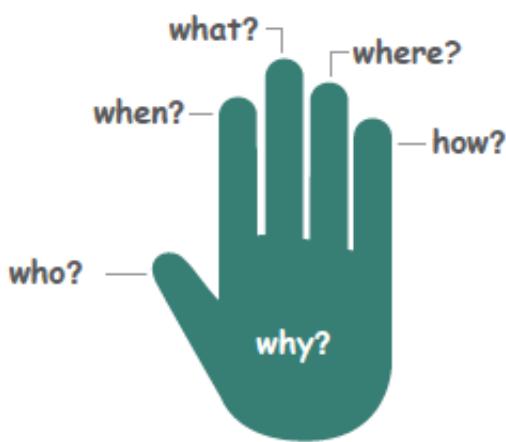


Some questions might be ...

- Who are the characters we have met so far in the story?
- What are they doing?
- Where are they going?
- Why did they ____?
- How did they ____?
- How do you think the character feels? How do you know?
- Do you know what the word ----- means?
- What would you do if ____ ?
- What do you think will happen next? ... Let's read to see if you are correct.

AFTER READING / TELLING:

1) Remembering / Retelling the Text



The following activities allow children to demonstrate their understanding of the book as well as reinforce the important ideas in the text.

Act it out: Children can put on a skit/play of the story. They might like to add their own dialogue or additional ideas.

Illustrate: Ask children to draw/sketch the most important scenes in the story, or use natural materials to represent the characters, setting and events. Children explain what they have created to retell the story.

5 Finger Retell (#1): Use one finger for each key detail of the story

- Who were the characters?
- When did it happen?
- What did the character/s do in the story?
- Where did the story happen?
- How did the story end?
- Palm: Why did the character ____ ?

Variations of these questions:

- How did ____ solve the problem?
- How did ____ reach his/her goal?
- Why do you think _____ wanted to ____ ?

Information Texts: Adapt the 5 Finger Retell strategy: Ask children to use their 5 fingers to retell 5 facts from the information text.

- Ask children if there were ideas in the text that they did not know before.

2) Connecting to Other Stories / Learning

Talk about how the ideas in the story / text were similar to other stories or books that children have read or heard.

Middle / Upper Primary Students should be able to identify how ideas in the text apply to your local context.

- **Example:** A story about an accident on the road could make children think about accidents in your local area and ways to stay safe when travelling.
- **Example:** An information text about plants – students might identify plants in your garden or community, how the plants are used, different parts / structures of the plant, how the plants grow (above ground or below ground, as a tree, vine, bush, herb), what plants need to survive (farming), which plants are sold at market.

3) The Type of Text



Talking about the type of text helps children to understand that some books may not be a 'story'. It also shows that authors create books for different purposes.

Some different types of texts include:

- **A Story** – characters and events may be imaginary or based on real people, places and experiences. There may be a lesson the reader can learn from the story.
- **A Recount** – tells about actual people and events that have happened (examples – a dangerous storm that came, or an accident on the road). It might model what to do / not do in a similar situation.
- **An Information Text** – gives true facts to help the reader learn about the world around them.
- **A Poem, Rhyme, Song** – may use rhyme, imaginative ideas or feelings to talk about a topic or theme.

Children may be able to talk about other books that are the same kind of text.

4) Evaluating the Story



Help children to think about which aspects of the story they liked or didn't like. This type of critical thinking can help them think about ideas when writing their own stories.

Some possible questions to ask ...

- Did you like the story? Why or why not?
- What part of the story do you like the most?
- Did the character make good choices?
- Would you make the same choice or do something different?
- Would you change any events in the story?

Variations:

Song / Poem – children can identify elements that they like in songs or poems. What would they change?

- True Information – Middle / Upper primary students may be able to identify whether the information in the book is the same as other books they have read on the topic.

OTHER ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO WITHOUT A STORY/TEXT:

Sing a song

(Purpose: Build Vocabulary)

Choose a familiar tune and 'sing' about an activity or topic. Ask children to suggest other ideas that could be added to the song. They may also be able to suggest some rhyming words or words that start with the same sound to add interest to the song.

- **Examples:** A song about cutting firewood or other chores
- **Middle / Upper primary Students** – Songs can be a good way to remember key information. Example: Children can make up a song about Food Groups in Health or Weather events in Science.

What doesn't belong?

(Purpose: Build thinking skills)

Gather 4 objects. 3 of them have something in common such as: Color, Shape, or Use. The 4th one does not belong to the group. Explain to the student that there is something similar about all these objects, but one of them is a little different. They have to pick up the object that is different and tell you why they chose it.

- **Example:** a plate, a cup, a spoon and a pencil. There are 3 objects that we use for eating and 1 that isn't used, so the pencil would not belong to the group.
- **After the child selects an object** and tells why it doesn't belong to the group, reverse the roles: the child sets up a group of objects and the parent chooses an object and explains their choice.

Tell me a story

(Purpose: Develop and express ideas)

Put 4-6 different child-safe objects in a bag/box. Ask your child – without looking – to pick out an object (i.e. stick). Use the object as a key character or object in an invented story. Take turns so everyone gets to choose an item and add their ideas to the story.

- **Example:** (a stick) ... Long ago in a village like this one, there lived a small boy who had to pick up sticks every day. He looked near and far to find enough sticks to carry home. (a hat) On his way, he saw a hat lying on the ground. ...
- **Variation:** Instead of collecting objects, children can take turns to suggest the next object for the story – examples: a cow, lightning, fire ... This can allow for greater variation in story ideas.
- **Middle / Upper Primary Students** – Ask the speaker questions about their story to challenge them to create the most engaging story they can!
 - Example questions: Why did he do that? What did he use? Was he successful?

RADIO ADAPTATION EXAMPLES

(Thanks to Colin Alfred [Save the Children] for these adaptation examples!)

SAMPLE RADIO SCRIPTS (SHORT SPOTS) ON READING COMPREHENSION AT HOME

STORYTELLING RADIO SCRIPT EXAMPLE:

[Continuity announcement -> Sig Tune -> FX children's footsteps and laughter]

Child's voice: Grandpa, Grandpa, can you tell us a story? Please...

Older adult: Of course I can. Let me think... I know. I'll tell you the story of _____ (any relevant traditional story). Once upon a time... (starts telling a local story; fade after a few seconds...)

[Optional: Music bridge]

Presenter: Children love to hear stories. Stories help children learn to understand more words and longer sentences. These language skills in turn help children with reading and writing in school.

[Optional: Music bridge]

Older adult: Did you like that story?

Child's voice: Mmm, yes.

Older adult: Shall we draw a picture about it now?

Child's voice: Mmm, yes. OK.

Older adult: I've got some paper here. Run and get your crayons.

Child's voice: OK, Grandpa!

FX: child's footsteps running... FADE

Presenter: Drawing a picture about a story encourages the child to think about the meaning of the story and remember the details. And if the child can also try to scribble a few words that is even better. It does NOT need to be completely correct: what's really important is what's happening in the child's head, not what happens on the paper.

[Campaign Signature tune to close; optional announcement crediting SC and/or a commercial sponsor, and radio station promotion.]

Tip: Choose the adult character according to which type of adult (parent or other relative, male or female, etc) you want to promote to engage in this activity. Ideally, produce variants for each, so that each repetition is slightly different.

Tip: Multiple versions can be made using different stories, so there can be repeated broadcasts that vary slightly

Tip: Depending on time slots offered, this script could be broken up into several spots.

Tip: Depending on the culture/context, keep children's replies minimal as many young children are shy and to avoid possible listener negative reactions (ex. "That's a very intelligent child in a rich well educated family, not like my kids, so this is not relevant for me...")

READ ALOUD RADIO SCRIPT ADAPTATION EXAMPLE (WITH A PICTURE BOOK):

[Continuity announcement -> Signature Tune -> FX children jumping or skipping and laughter]

Adult: OK kids, enough jumping / skipping! (adds emphasis) It's: STORY TIME

Children (chorus): Yay / hooray / Story time!

Adult: come and sit here, next to me, so you can see the pictures.

FX: children moving, sitting, pages of book turning

Adult: Let's start by looking at this picture, on the cover of the book. Tell me what you see there.

Child 1: It's got a bunny!

Child 2: Bunny got big long ears!

Child 1: There's two bunnies - look there's another one there!

Adult: That's right. There are two rabbits. And what do you think they're doing?

Child 2: Rabbits playing.

Adult: OK! So what do you think this story is going to be about?

Child 1: Maybe bunny rabbits play hide-'n'-seek?

Adult: They might be playing hide-and-seek. Let's read the story and find out... (FADE)

Music bridge

Presenter 1: That sounded fun!

Presenter 2: Yes. It seems like those children were really thinking about the story book.

Presenter 1: Right. And talking about it.

Presenter 2: But - they weren't actually READING it, were they?

Presenter 1: Not yet, no. But because they started by talking about it first, and thinking about what to expect, that means that when they do actually read the story they will be thinking about the MEANING of each sentence.

Presenter 2: Ah - I see! So they're practicing reading in order to UNDERSTAND, not just pronounce the words - is that the idea?

Presenter 1: Yes, exactly. That's really the most important aspect of children's reading in school - understanding the meaning of a story, or of any other piece of writing.

Tip: Identify the time slots available for the radio broadcast before producing the script. This will enable writers to design appropriate places in the story to cut the broadcast (ex. part 1, 2, 3, etc.) and/or to ensure the key content is covered in the allotted time.

Tip: Depending on the culture/context, it may be important to explain the kind of reading done in school (i.e. for meaning/learning), which may be different from reading done in some religious/liturgical settings (where pronunciation/fluency may be more emphasized than meaning making).

READ ALOUD RADIO SCRIPT ADAPTATION EXAMPLE (WITH A PICTURE BOOK):

[Continuity announcement -> Signature Tune -> FX children jumping or skipping and laughter]

Adult: OK kids, enough jumping / skipping! (adds emphasis)
It's: STORY TIME

Children (chorus): Yay / hooray / Story time!

Adult: come and sit here, next to me, so you can see the pictures.

FX: children moving, sitting, pages of book turning

Adult: Let's start by looking at this picture, on the cover of the book. Tell me what you see there.

Child 1: It's got a bunny!

Child 2: Bunny got big long ears!

Child 1: There's two bunnies - look there's another one there!

Adult: That's right. There are two rabbits. And what do you think they're doing?

Child 2: Rabbits playing.

Adult: OK! So what do you think this story is going to be about?

Child 1: Maybe bunny rabbits play hide-'n'-seek?

Adult: They might be playing hide-and-seek. Let's read the story and find out... (FADE)

Music bridge

Presenter 1: That sounded fun!

Presenter 2: Yes. It seems like those children were really thinking about the story book.

Presenter 1: Right. And talking about it.

Presenter 2: But - they weren't actually READING it, were they?

Presenter 1: Not yet, no. But because they started by talking about it first, and thinking about what to expect, that means that when they do actually read the story they will be thinking about the MEANING of each sentence.

Presenter 2: Ah - I see! So they're practicing reading in order to UNDERSTAND, not just pronounce the words - is that the idea?

Presenter 1: Yes, exactly. That's really the most important aspect of children's reading in school - understanding the meaning of a story, or of any other piece of writing.

Tip: Identify the time slots available for the radio broadcast before producing the script. This will enable writers to design appropriate places in the story to cut the broadcast (ex. part 1, 2, 3, etc.) and/or to ensure the key content is covered in the allotted time.

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Presenter 2: So that's what all those questions were for?

Before they even started
reading the story?

Presenter 1: Yes. And I think there will be more questions, as s/he reads the story... let's listen and find out... (FADE)

FX: pages turning, paper rustling, bring up Adult voice...

Adult: So can you tell me what has happened so far in the story?

Child 1: Yes, umm, the rabbits are playing.

Child 2: They were jumping and stuff.

Child 1: And hiding!

Adult: Right! And what do you think might happen next?

(brief pause)

Child 1: Mmm, I don't know.

Child 2: Maybe they get tired and go home?

Adult: Maybe. But look at the picture. What's that peeping over the hill?

Child 1 (excited): Oh! Doggie!

Child 2: That's not a doggie, that's a wolf!

Child 1: Wolfie!

Adult: Actually, that animal is called a FOX.

Child 2: Foxie!

Adult: OK. And do you know what Foxie likes to eat?

Child 1: No. What does foxie eat?

Child 2: Maybe ice cream? Causes it looks like it's hot and sunny in the picture...

Adult: Hmm... I suppose the fox might want a drink of water if it's hot. But for food, foxes eat meat.

Child 1: What kind of meat does foxie like? I like chicken!

Child 2: Do foxes eat chickens?

Adult: Yes, they do. But can you guess what else a fox might like to eat?

Child 2: Um... oh no! Do foxes eat rabbits?

Child 1: No no no! Naughty Fox! Don't eat the rabbits!

Adult: Let's read on and find out what happens...

(FADE)

Music bridge

Presenter 1: So there we heard the children recalling what had happened in the story so far, and then thinking about what might happen next.

Tip: Vary the length of the dialogue between the children and the adult based on the length of the time slot and the key messages to convey.

Tip: The kind of child dialogue possible may depend on the level of the child voice actors. Or, a studio producer can sometimes adjust the recording of an adult voice to sound child-like (ex. adjust the treble/bass contour for a higher pitch, speed it up a fraction, etc.)

TIPS FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

Presenter 2: And the adult also guided them to use the pictures for clues.

Presenter 1: Yes, the pictures in a child's book can be really helpful in developing this skill of thinking ahead, predicting what might happen next.

Presenter 2: So it's good for the adult reader to ask questions before starting the story, and also at some points during the story?

Presenter 1: Exactly. When reading a story to children, you can use questions to help keep the child's attention engaged, and to check they are really understanding the story.

Presenter 2: This is what teachers call 'comprehension' – right?

Presenter 1: Yes, this is all about developing children's comprehension skills

Presenter 2: So questions before reading the story, and during the reading – and again at the end of the story?

Presenter 1: Yes, at the end too. We'll talk about them some other time.

Presenter 2: OK. We're almost out of time. But I do have one question of my own...

Presenter 1: Yes...?

Presenter 2: What does happen in the story? Does the fox... you know... eat the rabbits?

Presenter 1: No, of course not! It's a children's book, with a nice happy ending. The rabbits hide from the fox, and escape.

Presenter 2: Ah! So the children guessed correctly, right at the beginning!

Presenter 1: What do you mean?

Presenter 2: Listen to what one of the children said...

Music sting (2 secs), then repeat earlier speeches lines:

Adult: ... So what do you think this story is going to be about?

Child 1: Maybe bunny rabbits play hide-'n'-seek?

Music sting (2 secs)

Presenter 2: You see? That's why it's a good idea to talk and ask questions when we tell a story or read to children. Talking about the story and asking questions encourages children to think about the meaning of the story. Practicing that skill, right from an early age, will really help a child later on, in school.

[Signal tune to close]

[Continuity announcements, etc.]

END

Tip: It can be useful to use radio to de-construct jargon terms for parents/ caregivers.

Tip: Do NOT overload a radio sketch with too many messages – choose just 1-2 messages per broadcast to ensure listeners can remember.

Instead, produce a series of radio broadcasts, where you can introduce different 'after reading activities' such as re-telling, drawing, acting, asking different types of comprehension questions, changing the ending, etc.

THANK YOU!!!



COVID-19 READING COMPREHENSION GUIDANCE: ***TIPS FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS***

For Queries or Questions,
please email: Heidi Schubert at hschubert@savechildren.org

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