



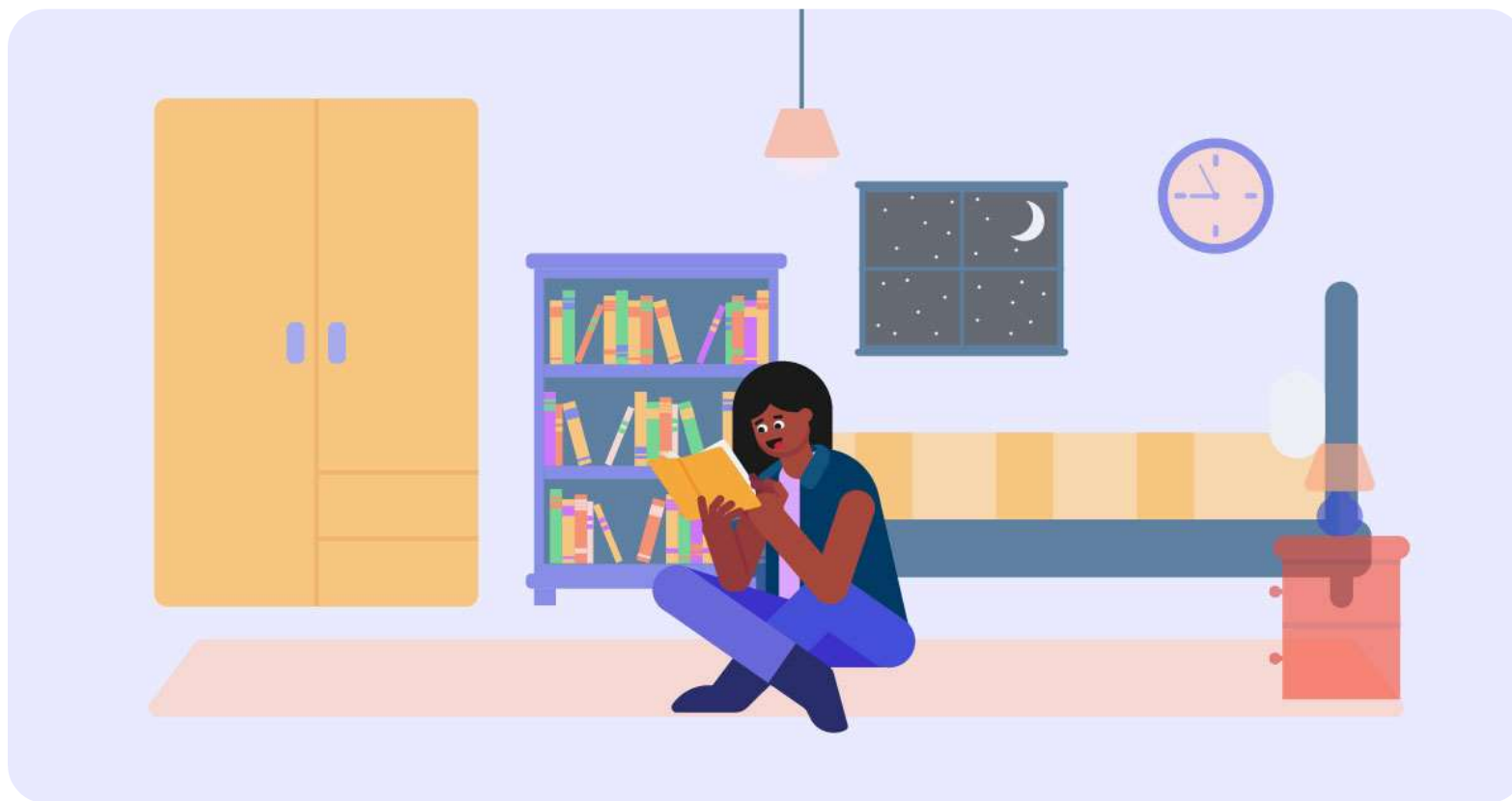
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## Why is Reading Important?

Written by Adele Keyser

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*This piece was updated on the 19th of February 2021.* “The more you read, the more things you know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.” This is a famous quote by Dr Suess. And it’s 100% accurate. The importance of reading skills cannot be stressed enough. As a teacher, I often find that when I express my concern about a child’s reading ability and comprehension to parents, particularly at around the age of 10, parents are quite taken aback and I’m greeted with “but they’re so young, give them a chance.” When a teacher shows concern in this area, it is with due cause. Reading is fundamental in helping us find and convey information. It’s an essential skill that’s developed at a very young age. Here’s why reading is beneficial to all of us, and how the importance of reading comprehension is essential to understanding the world around us.



## The benefits of reading

Reading has many benefits, but it’s a skill that even a lot of adults don’t use enough. Apart from the necessity of reading to get by in today’s world, let’s look at some other benefits of reading and how these can contribute positively to your child’s development.

### Reading helps you discover the world

Reading is a gateway to learning anything about everything. It helps you discover new things and educate yourself in any area of life you are interested in. You can find a book

on just about any subject you can imagine, dive in and start learning. Your child can learn about their interests (and even themselves) through reading things they enjoy.

## **Reading develops your imagination and creativity**



When we watch television or a movie, all the information is given to us on the screen – there's nothing we need to imagine. A book in its pure form is just words on a page, and our minds have to do the work, imagining the words coming to life. This does wonders to develop our creativity and imagination.



## **Reading improves vocabulary and communication**



Giving your child access to a world of words is one of the best ways to improve their vocabulary and enhance their spelling skills. New knowledge that's gained through enjoyment has a tendency to stick and doesn't even feel like work! Both their written and spoken communication abilities can be improved through regular reading.

## **Reading helps with building a good self-image and playing well with others**

Learning new concepts, discovering exciting places and understanding others' perspectives is key to building a well-rounded self-image – not to mention the self-esteem boost from being able to read well! It's at early ages that children can be most easily influenced, and a positive reading experience can do wonders to help them form a

positive perception of themselves. Reading also has social benefits. Children can discuss stories with others and form friendships over shared interests.

## **Reading improves concentration and reduces stress**



Not only does reading focus your attention entirely on the task at hand, it also immerses you in the information, improving concentration and memory of what you read. Getting completely involved in a book can help us relax and feel calm.



## **Active vs passive reading**



Learning to read is the first step. From there, your child will start to increase comprehension and become an active reader. The use of appropriate reading strategies is essential in learning and in life. So, what is the difference between a “passive” unskilled reader and an “active” skilled reader?

### **The passive reader**

Have you ever read a page in a book and not taken in anything you’ve just read? Or caught yourself reading and re-reading the same paragraph without actively acknowledging the words? This is passive reading without any meaningful engagement.

## The active reader

Active readers engage with what they're reading. They read with an open and questioning mind, and they stop to think more about what things mean. Here are some ideas, as set out by Miami University, of how skilled active readers read:



✓ They can predict what will happen next in a story using clues they gain from reading.



✓ They create questions about the main idea, message or plot.



✓ They monitor understanding of the sequence, context or characters.



✓ They stop to clarify parts of the text that have confused them. They connect events in the text to prior knowledge or experience.



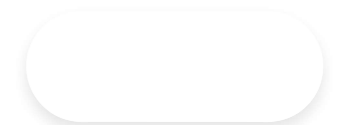
Problems with reading are often identified or can start to become an issue in Grade 4. It is at this stage that children need to start actively engaging with the material they read.

They are required to find information through active reading. An example would be reading something with comprehension for school. Without active reading skills, children can't make sense of how the information they're reading connects with anything. If they're required to compare two different sources of information, and their active reading skills aren't starting to develop more fully, they will struggle to comprehend how to complete the task. **If you're interested in improving your child's reading, you might be interested in promoting your child's active listening skills.**



# The importance of reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand a written passage of text. It's the bridge between the passive reader and active reader, and the crucial link to effective reading – essential for a rich academic, professional and personal life. Reading comprehension involves several different processes, such as imagining what the words describe, understanding the context of the book and being able to answer questions related to a text. Think about a book you've read before, and then try to summarise what the book was about. If your child can answer questions about a book or text, explain important events that happened in a story and have an opinion about why the events may have occurred, they're displaying comprehension skills. Without reading and comprehension skills, children will struggle to grow academically, as reading is the foundation to all academic subjects such as History, Mathematics and Science. It also influences your child's ability to write. Reading fluency is also a very important part of reading comprehension, as readers who spend their time decoding words often lose the understanding of what is being read. If your child is still decoding at a Grade 3 level, it's vital to focus on the basics to give them a strong reading comprehension foundation. This can include paying more attention, auditory analysis, sound blending, memory, processing speed and visual perception. A lack of strong reading comprehension skills affects a child's success at school, as academic progress depends on understanding, analysing and applying information gathered through reading.



# How to help your child's reading comprehension

If your child needs some help improving their reading comprehension, encourage active reading by focusing on these strategies:



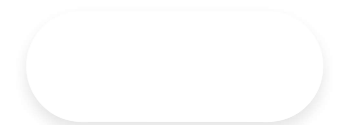
## Reading with purpose

Active reading encourages understanding through engagement with the text. If your child is interested in the material, they will be far more likely to involve themselves in learning about it and become a more active reader.

## Learning vocabulary

It's very easy to lose track of what you're reading if you don't understand some of the words, but we all tend to skim over words we don't know on occasion without taking the time to look them up. Learning new vocabulary will help your child get a deeper understanding of what they're reading. Ask your child to write down any words that they don't understand and you can look up the meanings together.

## Retelling what they've read



After they've read a short section of a text, ask your child to tell you about it in their own words. Recalling the story helps with comprehension, and you can also gauge how much they've understood.



## **Asking and answering questions**

Read the same text or chapter as your child and open a discussion by asking them questions about it and inviting them to do the same. Discussing a book is an excellent way to check understanding and keep the material fresh in their mind.



## **Summarising the important facts**



Summarising is a great way to improve active reading and comprehension skills. It requires an understanding of the whole text and judgement about which information is the most important. If your child can tell you the important parts of a story, they're well on their way to being an exceptional active reader!

# **What should parents do to improve their child's reading skills?**

A lot of reading difficulty can come about because children feel like reading is hard work, or they just aren't interested in what they are reading. Encouraging good reading habits is



a step in the right direction for parents looking to help their children read well.

## Read to your child

It's never too early to start reading to your child and reading together can become a healthy and enjoyable family activity. Reading out loud exposes young children to new words that will help their language skills. Interacting with books from an early age helps to make the activity into a routine.



## Read to yourself

If your child sees you reading regularly, they're more likely to build an interest in the activity. Find a book you love and read whenever you get the chance. Your child will learn from you.

## Surround them with books

Having a variety of books to choose from is a great way for your child to discover what interests them. Reading something enjoyable will do wonders for their curiosity and reading comprehension. They'll be skilled, active readers in no time! Reading is important because words are the building blocks of life. Get your child excited about reading, and they'll surprise you with their progress. **WorksheetCloud** offers your child access to engaging English and Afrikaans comprehension worksheets. **Sign up now** – we offer a seven-day money-back guarantee.

### **The Author - Adele Keyser**

Adele has 27 years experience in teaching pre-primary, foundation phase, intermediate-senior phase and adult education. That's 27 years experience in dealing with children (and parents!). Currently teaching in Cape Town, her major focus is building classroom environments that foster healthy self-esteem and help children realise what they're capable of.



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