

What can I do to help my child understand what he reads and what we read together?

Obviously, talking about the things that you and your child read together will help him understand what is read. However, there are other things you can do that don't even involve books that can help to develop your child's comprehension. Two of the most important things you can do are described below.

Talk and listen to your child (a lot). Reading is a language activity, and oral language is the foundation. Remarkably, research has shown that children's ability to understand what they read in middle and high school is related to the number of words in their spoken vocabulary in the early grades.

Reading to your child often and talking with him about what you read will certainly help to increase his vocabulary. However, conversations that occur throughout the day are also extremely important. Be thoughtful about the words you use when speaking with your child. Using more sophisticated vocabulary in



your day-to-day conversations will help to build your child's vocabulary. For example, you might use words like "scrumptious" and "feast" when talking about a meal, or words like "exhausted" and "fatigued" at bedtime.

Help your child learn about the world. As children move through the grades, they are expected to read and learn about things that go beyond their day-to-day experiences. The more your child knows about the world, the easier it will be for him to understand, and enjoy, the books that he reads.

While reading aloud to your child is a great way to build knowledge (and vocabulary), there are other ways as well. Watching educational television (such as shows on the nature and history channels), visiting educational websites (such as www.Kidsclick.org and www.nationalgeographic.com/kids), and taking trips to museums and local places of interest will all help your child to learn more about the world. Of course, he will benefit most from these activities when you do them – and talk about them – together.

