



Reading Comprehension At Home

Strategy Focus: *Determining Importance*

Reading is thinking!

How do good readers determine importance as they read?

Non-fiction Text Features that help determine importance:

Titles, bold headings, pictures with captions, quotations, timelines, graphs, text boxes, maps.

“Determining importance has to do with knowing why you’re reading and then making decisions about which information or ideas are most critical to understanding the overall meaning of the piece. . . The ability to figure out what’s most important in text starts with several simple actions you should take before reading: deciding your purpose for reading; consciously searching for new facts; reading with specific questions in mind; understanding that layout, particularly in nonfiction text, gives valuable clues to what’s important” (Zimmerman, p. 125)

Home activities to practice determining importance:

Investigate questions together:

The next time your child has an “I wonder” question, seek out information together. Use the question to find information on the internet, in the newspaper, in a magazine or in a book. Have your child help to research your next vacation or have them help you research a product they want to buy (i.e. a new bike, video game system, toy) to determine what is the best value..

Notice non-fiction text structures: As you read informational material with your child, direct their attention to text structures like headings, photo captions, bold words etc and explain how these can focus your attention on important information without reading the whole article. As you read, stop now and then to decide what facts are interesting and which ones are important.

Practice using the table of contents, glossary and index: Even something as simple as using a recipe to make your favorite cookies is an opportunity to use an index to look up the recipe you are interested in. Perhaps your child has Social Studies homework. Use their text book to note highlighted words they can find in the glossary. Overlooking this important features can help explain important concepts and vocabulary of the book and can help keep kids who are stumped by the unfamiliar words from giving up.