

Help develop your child's reading skills

Reading between the lines

For students in secondary school

Reading comprehension refers to the reader's ability to make sense of the text he is reading. Authors supply only part of the information that readers need to make sense of the text. The reader must supply the rest of the details.

The good news is that students in grades 9-12 are good at picking out and understanding the information that authors supply in their texts. But we also know that they have difficulty making sense of their reading when they have to supply the details that the author leaves out. This type of reading is often called "reading between the lines."

Learning to read between the lines

Readers who successfully "read between the lines" are able to pick up clues that the author leaves in the text. They also connect their own life experiences to what they are reading.

This type of reading requires that the reader act like a detective. She needs to make logical conclusions about the meaning of the text by using evidence. This evidence can take two forms – clues left by the author and experiences from the reader's own life.

Help develop reading comprehension by reading and discussing what your teen reads

One way to help your teen improve his reading comprehension is to read what he is reading yourself. Once you have some knowledge of the texts your teen is reading, try opening up a conversation with questions or statement starters like:

- I wonder why...?
- Why do you think...?
- What do you think will happen...?
- This reminds me of ...
- What do you think the author means by...?
- This is similar to...
- I'm confused about ...

Questions and statements such as these will stimulate deeper levels of understanding of the reading material and may open the door to some rich conversation between you and your teen.

Reading common articles from newspapers or magazines that come to your home and then discussing them is a great way to develop your teen's reading comprehension. Choose an article that interests both of you and then read and discuss it. Determine the important issues together. Start with the statements and questions previously mentioned or make up your own. Be sure that they are of the kind that go beyond the facts in the text.

It is important during these discussions to get your teen to make connections to his/her own life experiences and knowledge. You can model this by talking about how the article may relate

to experiences that you or other family members have had; how it relates to something else you have read; or how it relates to a movie you've seen.

Another way to use newspaper or magazine articles is for you and your teen to predict what the article is about based on the headline. Then read the article and see how accurate your predictions were. This is a good way to provide a purpose for reading.

Political cartoons in the editorial section of the newspaper are an excellent means to teach your son or daughter to pull meaning from a text. The difference here is that you are both working with images rather than words. Discuss each other's interpretations of what the cartoonist is trying to say.

The purpose of these discussions is to help your teen draw meaningful conclusions from the text and to back them up with evidence. So be sure to insist on the proof!

Engage your teen in reading through a variety of materials

Tap into other interests your teen may have. The lyrics found in his favorite music can be a good source of text from which to "read between the lines." *Music lyrics* often carry social and political messages and are filled with subtle clues. Listen to these lyrics with your teen and ask him what meaning he makes from the lyrics and the evidence he used to make it.

If your teen happens to have an interest in *poetry*, have her read some to you and then discuss what you both think it means. Poetry can also be written by using questions that arise while reading an article or book. The title of this poetry can be "I Wonder." Give it a try!

Book Clubs have become popular among adults. They are a way for friends to get together and talk about what they have read. Why not encourage your teen to start a book club with his friends and offer your home as a meeting place?

When is the last time you went to a *bookstore* or *library* with your teen? Make visits to a bookstore or library a regular part of the time you spend with your teen. When you're there, decide on a book or magazine that is of mutual interest. Then both of you can read and discuss it.

Remember – good readers are those who actively make sense of what they are reading. They do this by using clues from the text as well as their own life experiences. You can play an important role in helping your teen understand what she reads by doing some of the things discussed in this tip sheet.