

THE PARENT-FRIENDLY GUIDE TO READING COMPREHENSION

Practical ways to help P5 and P6 students understand texts, answer accurately and explain their thinking.

READ - THINK - PROVE - REVIEW

1

UNDERSTAND

What comprehension questions are really testing

2

SUPPORT

Simple prompts parents can use at home

3

PRACTISE

A short passage and parent answer guide

For parents and carers of P5 and P6 students

Suitable for home support alongside a Singapore-style upper-primary English programme.

How to use this guide

A calm, practical routine for supporting reading at home

02

A child can read every word aloud and still miss the meaning. Reading comprehension improves when students learn to pause, notice clues, connect ideas and explain answers clearly.

A simple four-step routine

1 READ	Read one short section. Stop at natural paragraph breaks.
2 ASK	Ask one question about meaning, not every possible question.
3 PROVE	Find the words or details that support the answer.
4 REVIEW	Check whether the answer is complete, precise and written clearly.

What this free guide covers

- the main reading skills tested in P5 and P6 comprehension
- what to do before, during and after reading
- literal, inferential and vocabulary-in-context questions
- main idea, sequencing, summary and evidence
- a short parent-and-child comprehension check with answers

WHY A FOCUSED GUIDE?

This free guide teaches the core habits that support many comprehension tasks. A later paid Reading Comprehension Toolkit can add graded passages, question-type practice, exam-style answer writing, trackers and separate student and tutor files.

Contents

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Core skills	Before & during	Question types	Answering well	Practice	Answers & next steps

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What does reading comprehension measure?

Understanding is more than remembering isolated facts

03

Most upper-primary comprehension tasks combine several skills. A child may be strong at finding details but less confident when a question requires inference, vocabulary knowledge or a concise summary.

Five layers of understanding

Skill	What the child does	Parent-friendly question
Retrieve	Finds information stated directly	Where does the text say that?
Infer	Combines clues to reach a sensible conclusion	Which clues helped you decide?
Vocabulary	Uses context to work out a word or phrase	What could replace this word here?
Organise	Tracks sequence, cause, main idea and relationships	How do these ideas fit together?
Respond	Explains an answer clearly and supports it	Have you answered the exact question?

Three questions that reveal real understanding

1. What happened, or what information did the writer give?
2. Why did it happen, or what can we work out from the clues?
3. Which part of the text proves your answer?

THE PARENT-FRIENDLY PRINCIPLE

Do not ask many rapid questions. One thoughtful question followed by "What makes you think that?" is usually more useful than a long quiz.

A helpful distinction

Reading the words	Understanding the text
Accurate pronunciation	Explaining meaning
Reading at a steady pace	Connecting ideas across sentences
Recognising vocabulary	Using context when a word is unfamiliar

Preview, predict and set a purpose

A sixty-second start can make the whole text easier

Strong readers do not begin with an empty mind. They use the title, headings, pictures and first lines to activate useful knowledge and form a sensible expectation.

The 60-second preview

1 NOTICE	Read the title and any headings. Look at the layout and text type.
2 PREDICT	Say what the text may be about and why.
3 CONNECT	Recall one useful fact, experience or related idea.
4 PURPOSE	Decide what to look for: events, explanations, viewpoints or instructions.

Useful parent prompts

- What kind of text do you think this is?
- What does the title make you expect?
- Which words or features gave you that idea?
- What might we need to pay attention to while reading?

PREDICTION IS NOT GUESSING

A strong prediction uses evidence from the page. It may change as the reader discovers new information. Changing a prediction is a sign of active reading, not failure.

Mini example

TRY IT TOGETHER

Title: The Last Boat Home

Ask: What problem might the character face? Which word in the title suggests urgency?

Then read the first paragraph and revise the prediction if necessary.

PARENT TIP

Keep the preview brief. The aim is to prepare the mind for meaning, not to discuss the text before the child has read it.

Monitor meaning as the text develops

05

Pause with purpose - not after every sentence

Students often lose understanding because they continue reading after a confusing sentence. Teach them to notice when meaning breaks down and use a simple repair strategy.

Four active-reading habits

Habit	What it sounds like	Why it helps
Pause	"What changed in this paragraph?"	Tracks the developing idea
Clarify	"This word is unfamiliar, but the next sentence gives a clue."	Repairs confusion
Visualise	"I can picture the narrow path and heavy rain."	Builds a mental model
Connect	"This explains why the character acted earlier."	Links ideas across the text

Signs that meaning has been lost

- the child reaches the end but cannot explain the paragraph
- pronouns such as he, she, they or it are no longer clear
- events or ideas appear disconnected
- an unfamiliar word blocks the whole sentence
- the child gives an answer based on memory rather than the text

A quick repair routine

STOP	Identify the exact sentence or word that caused confusion.
REREAD	Read the sentence before and after it.
REPLACE	Use a simpler word or explain the sentence in everyday language.
CHECK	Ask whether the paragraph now makes sense.
PARENT TIP Ask for a one-sentence "paragraph update": Who or what is this paragraph mainly about, and what new information did we learn?	

Literal questions: retrieve precisely

Find what the writer states directly

06

Literal questions are not always easy. The answer is stated in the text, but the child must locate the correct detail, understand the wording and avoid copying unnecessary information.

A three-step method

1 MATCH	Underline the key idea in the question and think of possible synonyms.
2 LOCATE	Scan the relevant paragraph for the same idea, not only the same word.
3 ANSWER	Use only the detail needed and write a complete, grammatical response.

Common problems to notice

Problem	Example	Better approach
Too much lifting	Copies two full sentences	Select only the detail that answers the question
Wrong paragraph	Matches one familiar word	Match the meaning of the whole question
Incomplete answer	"Because the rain."	"The event was cancelled because of the heavy rain."

TRY IT TOGETHER

Text: The team moved the rehearsal indoors because dark clouds were gathering and the wind had become stronger.

Question: Why did the team move the rehearsal indoors?

Strong answer: The team moved it indoors because the weather was becoming unsafe.

PARENT TIP

Ask your child to point to the exact words that contain the answer before writing. This reduces guessing and teaches careful evidence use.

Inference: use clues to read between the lines

07

A sensible conclusion must still be supported by the text

An inference is not a personal opinion. The reader combines one or more clues from the passage with reasonable knowledge to work out something the writer has not stated directly.

The inference equation

TEXT CLUE	What words, actions or details did the writer include?
WHAT I KNOW	What does this usually suggest in real life or in stories?
INFERENCE	What conclusion fits both the clue and the situation?

Worked example

TEXT Nina checked the clock for the third time. When the lift doors finally opened, she picked up her folder and hurried inside.		
Clue	Reasoning	Inference
checked the clock repeatedly	She is concerned about time	Nina may be late or anxious about an appointment
hurried into the lift	She wants to move quickly	The situation feels urgent

Common mistakes

- giving an answer that is possible but not supported
- using only one vague clue when the question asks for evidence
- copying the clue without explaining what it shows
- confusing an inference with a prediction about what happens next

PARENT PROMPT

"Which detail made you think that, and what does that detail show?"

Vocabulary in context

Work out the meaning the writer intended here

08

A familiar word can have different meanings in different sentences. Vocabulary-in-context questions test whether the child can use surrounding details, tone and word structure to select the meaning that fits.

Four context clues

Clue	What to look for	Example
Definition	The text explains the word	nocturnal - active at night
Example	A nearby example shows the meaning	tools such as hammers and drills
Contrast	An opposite idea gives a clue	unlike the noisy hall, the room was tranquil
Result	The effect reveals the meaning	the glass was fragile, so it cracked easily

The replace-and-test method

1 PREDICT

Explain the word in simple language from the sentence.

2 REPLACE

Insert a possible synonym.

3 TEST

Read the sentence again. Does the meaning and tone still fit?

TRY IT TOGETHER

Sentence: Although the path looked steep, Lena remained determined and continued climbing.

Possible meaning of determined: unwilling to give up.

Test: "Lena remained unwilling to give up" keeps the meaning of the sentence.

PARENT TIP

Do not begin with the dictionary. Ask the child to make a sensible prediction first, then use a dictionary to confirm or refine it.

Main idea, sequence and summary

09

See the shape of the whole text

Comprehension becomes easier when children can separate the main message from supporting details and track how ideas or events are organised.

Main idea: topic + most important point

Too broad	Too narrow	Strong main idea
"This passage is about school."	"The class planted basil."	"A class garden project taught students to solve practical problems together."

Track sequence and cause

Relationship	Clue words	Parent question
Sequence	first, later, meanwhile, eventually	What happened before and after this?
Cause and effect	because, therefore, as a result	What caused this change?
Problem and solution	however, solved, decided, managed	What problem was faced and how was it addressed?
Compare and contrast	both, unlike, whereas, similarly	What is similar or different?

A concise summary rule

KEEP	the main character or topic, the central problem or point, and the outcome
REMOVE	examples, repetition, minor descriptions and personal opinions
CHECK	Could someone understand the text from this summary alone?
PARENT ACTIVITY After each paragraph, write a three-to-five-word note. At the end, combine the notes into one or two clear sentences.	

Turn understanding into a strong written answer

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Answer the exact question and use evidence carefully

Students sometimes understand the passage but lose marks because the written answer is incomplete, vague or copied without control. A simple checking routine improves accuracy.

The AEC method

A - ANSWER	Respond directly using the wording and focus of the question.
E - EVIDENCE	Use the most relevant detail or clue from the text.
C - CHECK	Check tense, pronouns, completeness and whether every part was answered.

Match the answer to the mark value

Question value	Likely expectation	Useful check
1 mark	One accurate point	Have I given the required detail?
2 marks	Two points, or an answer plus evidence	Can I identify both scoring ideas?
3+ marks	Several linked points or explanation	Have I developed each part clearly?

Common-error clinic

Weak response	Problem	Improved response
"He was nervous."	No evidence or explanation	"He was nervous because he checked the clock repeatedly and hurried into the lift."
"Because the storm."	Sentence fragment	"The trip was delayed because of the storm."
Copies a whole paragraph	Answer is not selective	Use only the words needed, then frame them grammatically

FINAL CHECK

Ask: "Could a person understand this answer without seeing the question?" If not, the response may be incomplete.

Parent-and-child comprehension check

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A short P5/P6 check - not a full diagnostic assessment

THE ROOFTOP GARDEN

At the start of the term, the flat roof above the school canteen was empty except for two water tanks. The P6 science club proposed turning part of it into a small garden, but several adults were doubtful. Mr Lim, the caretaker, explained that the roof was hot and windy. He also pointed out that carrying water upstairs every day would be difficult.

Instead of abandoning the idea, the students investigated. They measured the hours of sunlight, researched plants that could survive heat and designed self-watering containers from reused bottles. During one meeting, Amir noticed a rainwater pipe near the stairwell. Although he rarely spoke first, he suggested collecting rainwater in covered barrels. The first model leaked, so the group changed the seal and tested it again.

Mrs Tan, the principal, was still reluctant to approve the project. The students therefore prepared a short presentation showing the cost, safety rules and a weekly care rota. Their careful planning persuaded her to allow a six-week trial.

By the fourth week, basil, mint and chillies were growing. When several plants wilted during an unusually hot spell, the students added shade cloth and adjusted the water flow. At the end of the trial, the canteen used some of the mint in drinks. More importantly, the roof had become a place where students tested ideas, learned from mistakes and solved problems together.

Questions - 12 marks

1. Give two reasons Mr Lim thought the garden would be difficult to manage. (2)

2. What does "reluctant" mean in paragraph 3? (2)

3. What does Amir's behaviour show about him? Use one detail from the passage. (2)

4. Why did Mrs Tan agree to a six-week trial? (2)

5. What was the most important result of the project? Explain your answer. (2)

6. Write a one-sentence summary of the whole passage. (2)

BEFORE MARKING

Ask your child to underline the evidence for Questions 1, 3, 4 and 5. Discuss one answer that felt easy and one that required more thought.

Answers, score guide and next steps

Use the result as a starting point, not a final judgement

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Suggested answers

1	The roof was hot and windy, and water would need to be carried upstairs. Award 1 mark for each reason.
2	Unwilling, uncertain or not ready to agree.
3	Amir was observant and willing to solve problems. He noticed the rainwater pipe and suggested using it, even though he rarely spoke first.
4	The students presented careful plans for cost, safety and weekly maintenance, which reduced her concerns.
5	Accept a supported answer. Strong response: the students learned to test ideas, improve after mistakes and solve problems together.
6	Accept an accurate concise summary, e.g. A P6 science club overcame practical difficulties to create a rooftop garden and learned through planning, testing and teamwork.

A cautious score guide

Score	What it may suggest	Useful next step
10-12	Secure in this short check	Continue with varied texts and precise answer writing
7-9	Developing	Revisit the question types linked to missed marks
0-6	Targeted support may help	Use a fuller skills check or guided comprehension practice

This six-question check is not a complete assessment. Performance can vary by text type, vocabulary, question wording, concentration and writing confidence.

The next step in the learning cycle

ASSESS	DIAGNOSE	LEARN	PRACTISE	REVIEW	IMPROVE
FREE GUIDES  Visit the resource library		WHATSAPP  +44 7362 587539		PERSONAL GUIDANCE Message Teacher Chris about suitable P5/P6 resources, professional marking and feedback, or 1-to-1 tutoring. Please include your child's year level and the reading skill they find most difficult.	
RESERVED FOR THE PAID READING COMPREHENSION EXPANSION Graded fiction and non-fiction passages • question-type practice • inference and vocabulary units • exam-style answer writing • progress tracker • separate student and tutor files • full answer guidance					