

How to Answer Comprehension Questions

Reading questions carefully and using the text properly will help you succeed in comprehension tasks.

1. Read the Question First

Before you look at the text, read the question carefully.

Underline the key words.

These tell you what the question is really asking.

Examples:

- **How many...** → your answer must include a **number**
- **Who...** → you must give a **person or character**
- **Where...** → your answer must include a **place**
- **Why...** → you must **explain a reason**
- **Which...** → you may need to choose from more than one option

2. Identify the Type of Question

Most comprehension questions fall into three main types:

A. Retrieval – “Find it in the text”

The answer is **directly in the text**.

Example:

How many brothers did the character have?

→ Look for a number in the text.

What to do:

- ✓ Find the sentence
- ✓ Copy the information (in your own words if needed)

B. Vocabulary – “Meaning of words”

You are asked what a word means.

Examples:

- *What does the word “ancient” mean in this paragraph?*
- *Find a word that means “angry”.*

What to do:

- ✓ Look at the **sentence around the word**
- ✓ Use the context to work out the meaning
- ✓ If asked to “find a word”, **copy it exactly from the text**

C. Inference – “Read between the lines”

The answer is **not written directly**. You must use clues from the text.

Examples:

- *What impression do you get of the character?*
- *How does the author show that the setting is dangerous?*

What to do:

- ✓ Look for clues in actions, descriptions or word choices
- ✓ Explain your thinking
- ✓ Use evidence: **“This shows that...”** or **“We know this because...”**

3. Look at the Text

Read through the text and attempt to answer the questions

- Scan for **key words** from the question
- **Highlight or underline** the sentence that contains the answer

4. Just write the answer down

You do not need to waste time with sentence starters. Instantly write the correct answer down in as few words as possible.

Example:

Question: *Why did the character run away?*

Unnecessary opening: **The character ran away because.....**

More efficient answer: **He was scared of the noise in the forest.**