Simple Ways to Build Your Child's Comprehension and Storytelling Skills at Home

As a teacher, I've found a few simple activities that make a big difference when helping children become confident readers and storytellers. You can try these at home too!

Retell the Story in Their Own Words

The Brave Little Squirrel

Once upon a time, in a big green forest, there lived a little squirrel named Nibbles. Nibbles loved to collect acorns and leap from tree to tree. But there was one thing Nibbles had never done—cross the wide river at the edge of the forest.

One morning, Nibbles spotted a shiny golden acorn on the other side of the river. "I have to get that acorn!" he said to himself. He asked his friend Bella the bird for help.

"I can fly you over," said Bella. "But you'll need to be brave!"

Nibbles took a deep breath and climbed onto Bella's back. They flew high above the river. Nibbles was a little scared, but he held on tight.

When they landed safely on the other side, Nibbles grabbed the golden acorn and shouted, "I did it!"

From that day on, Nibbles wasn't just a squirrel who collected acorns—he was a brave adventurer too.

While you're reading together, pause and ask questions such as:

- "What do you think will happen next?"
- "Why do you think the character did that?"
- "Who's your favorite character, and why?"

Why it works: These questions encourage your child to think critically and stay engaged with the story.

Ask your child:

- Who were the main characters?
- Where did the story take place?
- What happened first, next, and last?
- What was the problem, and how was it solved?

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Why it works: Retelling helps your child remember what they've read and understand it on a deeper level.

Make Up Stories Together

Start a story with one sentence like, "Once there was a dog who loved to fly kites..." Then take turns adding sentences to build the story.

Helpful Tips for Parents

- Encourage detail: Ask your child, "What did that look like?" or "How did the character feel?"
- Focus on sequence: Help them use words like first, next, then, and finally.
- Have fun: Let the story go in silly directions. Laughter helps learning stick!
- Model rich language: Add adjectives or new words and explain what they mean.

Starters to Try

Here are some fun, creative first lines to kick off your storytelling adventure:

Animal Adventures

- "A raccoon found a mysterious map in the trash can."
- "The tiniest elephant in the world wanted to be a ballet dancer."
- "A penguin showed up at our front door with a suitcase."

Magical Moments

- "Every time Leo opened his lunchbox, a different creature popped out."
- "There was a girl who could talk to clouds."
- "At midnight, the old tree in the backyard started to glow."

Everyday with a Twist

"We went to the grocery store and came back with a robot."

"My backpack started talking to me during math class."

"Today, my bike turned into a rocket ship."

Try These Today!

You don't need fancy tools—just a book, a little time, and your child's imagination. These moments together are not only educational but also a lot of fun.

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