

Be a successful reader.

Using these **reading strategies** will help you improve your understanding of what you read. Ask yourself these kinds of questions when reading:

Before reading:

- What do I know about this kind of text (poem, glossary, news article) that will help me?
- Should I adjust my reading rate to match the purpose of my reading?
- What do I think this will be about?
- What do I already know about this topic?

During reading:

- What can I learn from the text features (table of contents, captions, diagrams, etc.)?
- Were my predictions correct?
- Are there challenging parts where I need to use other strategies, such as rereading?
- How can I use context clues or other strategies to figure out difficult words?

After reading:

- Can I summarize this using a graphic organizer (chart, timeline, web)?
- How are the events (ideas) related to the theme?
- How does this text compare to others I have read or seen?
- Whose viewpoint is presented? Whose viewpoint is missing?

Recognize the signs of a successful reader.

In Grade 7, your adolescent will read a variety of fiction and non-fiction that may cover topics beyond his or her personal experiences. Some will have mature themes that deal with human problems, such as abuse, war or racism. You can tell whether your child is reading successfully by watching for growth in the following **reading behaviours**, described in the Provincial Achievement Standards for the **end of Grade 7**

Checking for understanding and adjusting reading strategies when meaning is lost

Encourage your preteen to understand difficult passages by rereading, skimming, scanning and making connections.

Using strategies to solve unknown words independently

Encourage your child to use context cues, word order and word parts (e.g., prefixes, suffixes and root words) to solve longer words in all subjects.

Automatically recognizing a wide variety of words including those in different school subjects

Encourage your preteen to notice and remember words that occur often in school subjects (variable, integer, ecosystem, geological, economic, cultural).

Reading with expression and confidence

Invite your preteen to read aloud to you sometimes. Praise his or her efforts.

Verifying and adjusting predictions while reading

Encourage your child to use clues in the text and text features (e.g., titles, headings, photographs and captions) to make predictions and then check how close they were.

Reflecting on strategies used to understand what is read

Encourage your preteen to tell you how she or he uses strategies to improve understanding (e.g., forming mental pictures while reading, making connections, asking questions).

You can be involved in building your child's reading skills.

Although your preteen is more independent, you still play an active part in his or her learning. One way is to help your child set aside enough time for reading. When possible, give her or him a choice of reading material that is appealing (newspapers, magazines, suitable internet sites). Invite your child to talk about what he or she is reading. You might enjoy reading some of the same books and discussing them. If you do, here are some examples of questions you could ask each other to get the conversation started:

- Why is this event or character's action important to the story?
- What do you think the author wants you to think about and remember?
- Does the author keep you interested in this selection? How?
- Do you think that the author is presenting all viewpoints?

Andrew Holleman: On a Mission

Article by
Mandy Hager

In the small town of Chelmsford, Massachusetts, 250 people were crowded into a school gymnasium. A boy rose from his seat and walked to the front of the room. He looked nervously at the crowd. "My name is Andrew Holleman," he began, "and I'm twelve years old."

This meeting was the result of weeks of hard work by Andrew Holleman, who had set himself a **daunting** goal – to save one of his favorite places. Anybody faced with a task like this might feel overwhelmed, but Andrew knew his goal was within reach.

It started when Andrew opened a letter. What he read made him burn with anger.

A developer was planning to build a subdivision next to Andrew's backyard. This meant that 16 acres of land, where Andrew had fished and explored, would disappear.

The wetland would be replaced by drainage systems, roads, and nearly two hundred houses.

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Andrew loved the white pines that towered above the fishing hole. Some of the rocks had been carried there on glaciers ten thousand years ago. The land was also home to red foxes, wood turtles, and endangered blue herons.

The developers had money and authority behind them. Why would they listen to a twelve-year-old's protests? Andrew knew that the odds were against him, but he had to try. After Andrew read the letter, he took the first step – he decided to act.

"I had nothing to lose by fighting the developer," he later said, "so I did."

Breaking It Down

The only way to tackle such a huge task was to break it into pieces and work through one piece at a time. Andrew needed a plan, but before he could make one, he needed knowledge. The best way to begin? Research!

At the library, Andrew uncovered information about a law known as the Hatch Act. This law was put in place to protect wetland areas. When Andrew studied the town's master plan, he discovered that half the land the developers were planning to build on was classified as wetland. If the development went ahead, it was likely to break the law.

Getting the Word Out

This was just the opportunity Andrew needed. He had the information, now he had to use it in his fight against the developers.

He planned to persuade as many people as possible to join him. He wouldn't stop at talking to his friends and family – he planned to get the message across to everyone from the Town Board to state senators.

Andrew took a petition around Chelmsford to collect signatures. He spent a lot of time talking to neighbors and local people, making sure that they knew it was better for everyone if the development was stopped. All this talking was great for Andrew's confidence – he'd always been

shy, but with something this big to fight for, he had to get over his nerves.

Andrew's Argument

Andrew drafted a petition, listing reasons to prevent the development. He included the following facts:

- A residential development would destroy the habitat of some endangered species.
- The wetland is a major hunting ground for birds such as hawks. These birds needed the wetland to survive.
- If two hundred homes were built in the area, chemicals would run off driveways and into the stream, polluting wells and harming aquatic life.
- Pollution would filter into the soil, poisoning plants and trees.
- A development would upset the wetland's ecosystem. This would affect other ecosystems in the town, such as parks and rivers.

By the **end of Grade 7**, your preteen should be able to read and understand reading material similar to that above. Some topics, such as pop culture, fictitious societies and other worlds, tend to have special appeal for this age group. In keeping with his or her growing independence, your adolescent may enjoy books that challenge your idea of what is suitable.

The language in reading material for this age is more challenging, so your child may occasionally have to use a dictionary or glossary, or look for clues in the surrounding text, to understand a word or phrase.

In fiction, plots are more complicated (subplots, multiple story lines, unexpected twists). Main characters may be complex and unpredictable, with shades of good and bad.

Information texts, such as the extract from *Andrew Holleman: On a Mission*, convey additional information through text features, such as subheadings, captions, bold type and sidebars (*Andrew's Argument*). At this age level, the amount of information presented may require the reader to synthesize ideas rather than remember every detail.

Contact Us

The Department of Education is committed to your child's reading and writing success. If you have any questions about your child's progress or about how you can be an active part of his or her learning, contact your child's teacher or the provincial literacy team at 506-453-2812.