

Helping Your Child with Inference at Home

What is Inference?

Inference is often described as 'reading between the lines'. It means using clues in the text, pictures and our own knowledge to work out something the author has not said directly.

When children are learning to read, their minds are already working hard. They are focusing on phonics, word recognition, fluency and understanding what is happening in the text. This means it can be tricky to look beyond the words on the page.

Like anything else, inference is a skill that develops with practice. The more children are encouraged to notice clues, talk about ideas and explain their thinking, the more confident they become.

What clues should children look for?

When children infer, they are acting like reading detectives. They need to slow down and notice the small clues an author or illustrator has included.

These clues might be found in what a character **says**, what they **do**, how they **look**, or how they **react**.

Encourage your child to ask, "What clue helped me think that?" This helps them move from guessing to using evidence.

Making Inference Part of Reading Time

Inference doesn't need to feel like a test. Some of the best reading discussions happen naturally when you pause, wonder aloud and talk about the story together.

You might say, "I wonder why she did that?", "I don't think he is telling the truth. What do you think?" or "That's interesting. What clue made you think that?"

It is also fine for children to have different ideas, as long as they can explain them. Inference is about using clues to make a sensible interpretation, not always finding one perfect answer.

Questioning

You don't need to ask lots of questions. In fact, a few thoughtful questions can be much more powerful.

A simple way to deepen your child's thinking is to add a follow-up question. For example, after asking "How do you think the character is feeling?", you might add "What makes you think that?" or "How do you know?"

These small follow-up questions encourage children to explain their ideas, use evidence from the text and think beyond their first answer.

What do you think could happen next? **Which clue helped you to decide?**

Why is the character behaving that way? **How do you know?**