Comprehension Strategies
Part 1: During Reading

Helping children understand that texts carry meaningful messages, and supporting them in exploring those meanings, are critical in learning to read. Here are some steps to help support struggling readers in understanding the meaning of what they read.

**Step 1**
Help children recognise when they haven’t understood something.
- Model the internal thought processes of a fluent reader as they question a text as they read. Encourage struggling readers to **stop** and **clarify** when they don’t understand something.

**Step 2**
What do fluent readers do to help them understand meaning?
- Check the meaning of unknown words if it’s the vocabulary causing the problem.
- Re-read the sentence or the paragraph to give more conscious attention to understanding.
- Temporarily tolerate some ambiguity/lack of understanding and read on to see if the sense becomes clearer as more information is revealed.
- Share their puzzlement with someone else and discuss what it means together.

Demonstrate these strategies when you read aloud and explain why you are, for example, re-reading a sentence slowly, ‘I’m reading this again so I can concentrate on what it means’. This will help struggling readers understand the silent processes that go on in the head of a fluent reader.

**Step 3**
Encourage children to apply Steps 1 and 2 in their own reading.

Helping struggling readers understand as they are reading

1. Model the process. Make public the internal private conversations readers have as they read, so children can see what goes on in the head of a skilled reader.

2. Remind children to use the strategies when they don’t understand something.

3. Notice them using strategies and praise them for using them independently. They need to internalise the strategies and make them their own.