

At Home Activities

The "Whodunit" Case File

Treat the book like a crime or mystery that needs solving. You play the Chief of Police, and your child is the Lead Detective. Instead of a standard retell, they must present their "Case File" to you using specific transition words. They must use the "Because / But / So" framework: "The main character wanted [Goal]... BUT [Problem happened]... SO they tried [Action]... BECAUSE [Motivation]."

The Story Mountain Climb

Draw an imaginary mountain in the air with your finger. Have your child re-trace the mountain in the air as they talk:

- Mountain Base: Introduce the characters and setting.
- Climbing Up: The events building up to the problem.
- The Peak: The most intense or exciting moment.
- Going Down: How the problem starts getting fixed.
- The Base: What did the character learn, or what is the moral?.

The Villain's Side of the Story

Have your child retell the events of the story from the villain's perspective to make them look innocent or misunderstood. For example, "Mr. Wolf just had a terrible cold. He went to ask for sugar, and his sneezes accidentally leveled those poorly built houses!"

The Reverse Retell

Start at the very end of the story. Your child has to retell the story backward using cause-and-effect language.

Example: "The story ends with the turtle winning the race. That happened because the hare fell asleep. The hare fell asleep because he was so far ahead and arrogant. He was far ahead because he is faster than the turtle..."

Retell Auction

Tell your child they have an imaginary budget of \$10 to "buy" the story back from you. Every sentence they use in their retell costs them \$1. However, if they use a high-level third-grade word (like Therefore, Consequently, Meanwhile, However, or Furthermore), they earn \$2 back. The goal is to finish the summary with more money than they started with. *Bonus! Your child can practice math skills with this strategy as well.

The Movie Pitch

Pretend your child is a Hollywood screenwriter pitching this book to you to turn it into a blockbuster film. They have to "sell" you on the plot, but you are a tough crowd. You can interrupt them with producer questions like: "Who cares about the setting?" or "what happens if the main character fails?"

Did You Know?

If your child reads perfectly but can't retell the story, they may be using too much energy sounding out words instead of picturing the action. They need automaticity or the ability to read words instantly and effortlessly.

