



Activate the Brain

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.” - Dr. Seuss



What does it mean to activate the brain?

Activating the brain means **thinking and making connections – reading for meaning (comprehending what is read)**. It means **thoughtfully interacting** with the text. Reading words without activating the brain is like taking a drive without enjoying the view, or eating a sundae without the toppings – something is missing!

Why is it important to activate the brain while reading?

- Our **brain changes and grows** with new experiences. We can strengthen our brain connections by practicing remembering, visualizing or using new information. ¹
- **Employers are looking for** individuals who can think critically, solve complex problems, contribute to innovation in the workplace, apply knowledge and show the capacity for continued new learning. ² These skills can all be developed through activating the brain while reading!
- Kids able to activate the brain using mental imagery are **better able to remember** what they've read. ³ This can affect performance **in all areas of school – not just reading**.



Tips: How can I help my child activate the brain?

- **Predict** what might happen – or what might happen next. Look at the pictures.
- **Think Aloud and Question:** Ask questions that don't have a single correct answer or any answer at all like: “I wonder...” “What do you think about.....?”
- **Visualize:** Encourage your child to make a picture in his/her mind. Imagine what it might look like. Make a “mental movie.”
- **Make Connections** to other books, to your own life or what you already know about the world. “This book reminds me of...” Read many books on the same topic and compare them.
- **Check for Understanding** by thinking aloud and questioning while reading. “Does that make sense?” “I don't get it – I better read that again.”
- **Summarize and Retell** the story by using language like, First, Next, Then, Last. Act out a story for a fun twist on retelling.
- **Apply and enjoy!** Do something with what you've read. If you read about climbing trees, go outside and give it a try! Making it fun means creating memories and growing the brain!

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1. Oliver Keene, E (2007). *Mosaic of Thought*. Portsmouth, NH Heinemann
2. Association of American Colleges and Universities press release 2013 LEAP compact and employer survey
3. Gambrell, L.B., & Bales, R.J. (1986). Mental imagery and the comprehension-monitoring performance of fourth and sixth grade poor readers. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21, 454-464.

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