TalkforReading

15 ways to help children hone prediction skills

1. Cover investigation

- Show the cover or title and get the children to speculate on the type of book, its purpose, contents, readership and style.
- Use the blurb, section or chapter headings, items from the index or glossary to tease children so that they begin to think about what the book might be about. This all helps to engage and set up a sense of reader expectation.
- Try using several books – look at the covers or titles and ask which would be best for a specific purpose. Show three books – which would you like to read and why?
- Share the title of a story or poem or begin with a key line and see what the children predict.

2. Predict events from key aspects

- **Story:** select key characters, settings and objects – children have to guess the story type or plotline.
- **Non-fiction:** provide sub-headings or chapter titles and children predict content.
- **Poetry:** provide images as a starting point for prediction.

3. Slow reveal

- This is a key teaching strategy to sharpen children's predictive skill. Take a section of the text and put it onto a PowerPoint so that you can reveal a sentence at a time.
- Pause after each sentence so the children can discuss what they know so far and what might happen next.
- Make sure the passage you choose lends itself to prediction so that there are specific clues but also some aspects that are inferred.
- It can also help if the text leads the reader towards one interpretation but then the writer throws up something unexpected as this holds attention.

4. Opening to ending

To make this easy to prepare, take end sentences or paragraphs from different books.

- Provide the opening sentence and six possible end sentences – which do they children think goes with the opening and why? What do they think happens in between?
- Match an opening paragraph to an ending.
- Read the opening of a text: the children have to predict the purpose of the text, who might enjoy reading it and why. What do they think will happen in this text?
- Get children thinking about stereotypes in fiction linked to different types of narrative. Typically, in this sort of writing what characters, settings and events will we meet?
- Provide the ending and children predict the opening or key events.

5. Predict words/sentences as subheadings

- Provide subheadings in non-fiction: the children have to write down 3 key words or pieces of information that are bound to appear.
- Predict and write typical sentences that might appear under a sub-heading.
- Predict the key connectives/adverbials/conjunctions that might appear.

6. Cut ups

- For very close scrutiny, take a short poem or paragraph and cut it up so the children have to reassemble it. This will involve some prediction on their part as they choose what is most likely to come next as well as they flow of meaning and syntax.
- You could also try providing an opening paragraph and then several possible other paragraphs. They have to choose which they think would be ion the same text, basing their ideas on the style and content.

9. Sequel and prequel

- Read a short story or narrative poem.
- Children then create what they think might have happened before the text started and write or outline the next story/text, giving reasons to support their ideas from evidence in the text.

7. Boxing up

- Provide a boxed-up text pattern but leave some blank spaces for the children to predict what might be included.
- Here is an example from an information report:

Introduction - foxes	
What they look like	
Conclusion	

8 Timeline events

- This activity is similar to the one above but the text is represented by a chronological timeline.
- The children plot what has happened so far and then plot what might happen next, drawing on what they know of the text type but also from clues in the text.

10. Images, picture books or film clips

- Provide the children with an image. They have to predict what happened just before and what might happen next.
- Use photos, works of art or a short film clip.
- Start work on a picture book by working from an image in the middle of the book. The children then have to 'read' the image and use this as a basis for predicting what has just happened on the previous page and what will happen next.

11. Guess the title

Provide children with a short story, piece of non-fiction or poem but omit the title. The children have to read the text carefully and decide on what the title might be.

12. Cloze

- Select an extract from the text that you are going to be working on. Present it as a cloze procedure with key words omitted. The children have to use the meaning of the text, the syntax and their understanding of the appropriate writing style to fill in the gaps with an appropriate word or phrase or sentence.
- A variation of this activity is to provide a section of the text but only have the opening half of each sentence. The children have to complete these – or just provide the second half of each sentence.

13. Purpose – which book?

- Suggest a purpose for reading, e.g., to find out about taking a holiday in another country. Set out five texts and the children have to decide which would be most useful to read and why.
- Provide a selection of books. Children have to discuss which they think will be best for different purposes, e.g., to find out information, to read to a younger child, etc.
- Use the blurbs on the back to help as evidence.

14. Predictions about the writer

Having read a book or text, discuss what the writer needed to know or do in order to write the book plus who would be most interested in reading it and why.

15. Dealing with wild predictions

If you have children who make wild inferences or predictions then take several suggestions, list them and ask the children to discuss which is **most likely** given the evidence in the text and what we know about life.