Retrieve, Infer, Sequence: Teaching the Three Reading Question Types in Year 2

A simple guide to the three types of reading questions your child will encounter in Year 2, helping you understand how they find information and make sense of stories.

What are these reading questions?

In Year 2 (children aged 6 to 7), reading comprehension—which is the ability to understand and make sense of a text—is broken down into different skills. There are three main types of questions your child will see. 'Retrieval' questions ask children to find a fact written clearly in the text. 'Inference' questions ask them to be a detective and work out something that isn't said directly, using clues from the story. 'Sequencing' questions ask them to put events in the correct order. Understanding these types helps children realise that different questions require different ways of thinking.

How do these questions work?

Children often know the story well but might struggle if they don't recognise what the question is asking them to do. For retrieval, they look for 'clue words' like 'find and copy'. For inference, they might see 'why do you think...?', which tells them to use their imagination and the text to find an answer. For sequencing, they are often asked to 'number these 1-4'. By spotting these patterns, children can choose the right strategy to find the answer, rather than guessing. Every school may teach these slightly differently, so it is a good idea to ask your child's teacher about the specific methods they use in class.

What this means for your child

You might find that your child can read the words perfectly but struggles to answer a specific question. This usually isn't a problem with their reading, but rather a need for more practice in identifying the question type. For children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) or those learning English as an additional language, these patterns provide a helpful framework. Using simple sentence starters—such as 'I know this because...' for inference—can give them the confidence to express their thoughts clearly and show the teacher what they have understood.

Simple ways to help at home

You don't need formal worksheets to help. Instead, try short, playful chats while reading a bedtime story. For retrieval, ask: 'What colour was the dog?' and encourage them to find the sentence in the book. For inference, ask: 'How do you think the character feels?' and ask why. For sequencing, ask: 'What happened first, and what happened next?'. Keep these moments light and happy. The goal is to build a love of reading and a gentle curiosity about how stories are put together, rather than drilling for correct answers.

Common questions from parents

Many parents wonder why their child misses a mark even when the answer seems obvious. Often, this is because the child has used their own outside knowledge instead of the text provided. You can help by gently reminding them to 'be a detective' and look for evidence in the story. Other parents ask if they

should push their children to read harder books; however, the focus in Key Stage 1 (the stage of education for children aged 5 to 7) is often more about understanding the meaning of the text than the difficulty of the words.

Sources

- Department for Education, National Curriculum in England: English programmes of study
- GOV.UK, National Curriculum in England