Part 7: Reading Comprehension—Recognising Cause and Effect

The purpose of cause-effect is to demonstrate a relationship between two things. A cause is why something happens; an effect is what happens. To find an effect, good readers ask, “What happened?” To find cause, readers ask “Why did this happen?” They may be stated in either order, that is, the effect may appear before the cause in the text. Understanding cause-effect relationships is an important aspect of comprehending. It is vital when comprehending science, social studies and history texts. Causes may not be directly stated in the text and readers are required to reorganize ideas and use prior knowledge. Good readers understand that an effect can have numerous causes and the one cause may have several effects.

Tips to help at home!

✓ Name a cause and have your child identify an effect and vice versa. What can cause you to wake up late? What is the effect of walking in the rain? Discuss together.
✓ Play a simple game in which you orally provide a situation (or a cause). Ask your child to fill in an action (or an effect).
✓ Share the children’s book If You Give A Mouse A Cookie by Laura Joffe Numeroff with your child. Point out the use of specific cause/effect words used in the book, including if...then. Keep a running tally of all the causes and effects that happen in the story.
✓ Set up dominoes on a desk or table and discuss what will happen when the first domino falls over.

Focus Questions

To help your child recognize cause and effect, ask him/her the following questions:

What events does the author describe in this story?
What causes are given for the events described in this story?
Which words and phrases did the author use to signal cause/effect relationships? (because, since, thus, so that, if...then, therefore, nevertheless, this led to, as a result of, then...so, for this reason, on account of, due to... consequently).
What happened? Why did it happen?
Were there more than one cause or effect? Does the author tell me exactly what happens and why, or do I need to fill in some missing ideas?