

# When Your Child Says "I Don't Know."

WORDS THAT BLOOM · MINI-TOOLKIT

Every parent has been there. You ask a question, and your child shrugs, looks away, or says, "I don't know."

**But here's the secret:** those three words don't mean they aren't thinking — they usually mean they need a bridge back into the story.

This mini-toolkit gives you gentle, no-pressure ways to keep the conversation flowing when your child hits that moment.

## Why It Happens



Feel unsure what's being asked



Need more time to think or find words



Are afraid of getting it "wrong"



Need a visual or emotional cue to reconnect

## What to Try Instead

When you hear "I don't know," offer an **invitation**, not an interrogation. Here are a few conversation rescues that reopen curiosity:

RESCUE PHRASE	PURPOSE
<i>"Let's peek at the picture together."</i>	Gives a visual cue and reduces pressure.
<i>"What's one thing you do notice?"</i>	Shrinks the question and invites success.
<i>"Would you like me to guess first?"</i>	Models thinking aloud and makes it playful.
<i>"Let's reread that part."</i>	Supports comprehension through repetition.
<i>"Hmm, what do you think the character might do next?"</i>	Gently redirects attention back to prediction.

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*"That's okay — sometimes I need to think, too."*

Normalizes reflection and keeps trust intact.

## Try This

Next time your child says "I don't know," take a slow breath, smile, and try one of these rescues. Notice how the tone shifts from **tension to curiosity**.

**Connection first, conversation second** — answers will follow.

*“Every “I don’t know” is just an invitation to slow down and wonder together.”*

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