

Family Guide to Selecting “Just Right” Books at Home

How can you help your child find books that are not “too hard” and not “too easy” but instead are “just right”? Here are questions to ask when looking for a good-fit book:

What is my child’s reading level, and how was this determined?

You may request your child’s reading level from his or her teacher. These reading levels are indicators of probable reading success. A teacher considers many factors when determining a child’s reading level: comprehension skills, reading fluency and rate, stamina, volume of reading, and in some cases, writing skills.

Where can I find appropriately leveled books for my child?

Many resources may help you locate “just right” books for at-home support. Your child’s teacher will be the best resource for recommendations of titles at your child’s reading level. In addition, you may also search the following websites/resources:

- **Scholastic Book Wizard**
Search by guided reading level
<http://www.scholastic.com/bookwizard/>
- **A to Z Teacher Stuff Leveled Book Database**
Search by guided reading level
<http://books.atozteacherstuff.com/leveled-books/>
- **Level It Books (app for Apple and Android users)**
A great way to organize, level, and track your books digitally
<http://levelitbooks.com/>
- **Leveled Book List from Fountas & Pinnell (book)**
Official Fountas & Pinnell leveled book list, sorted by title and by level.
[The Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Book List, K-8, 2006-2008 Edition](#)

Is the reading level appropriate for my child?



Read-alouds: If your child is interested and paying attention to your reading, the reading level is less important. Remember, too, that some older children may choose to read the same books during independent reading, so be sure to select a few read-aloud books that match their reading level.



Independent reading: Regardless of a child’s desire to read a book independently, a book that is above his or her reading level will cause frustration. To quickly determine whether the child is ready, **try the five-finger rule:** Choose any page in the book and ask the child to begin reading. If the child comes to a word he or she cannot recognize or pronounce, hold up one finger. If you are holding up five fingers before the child has finished reading the page, the book is probably above the child’s reading level. (Try again in a few months.)

Does this book match my child's stage of development?

How children respond to books depends not only on age, interests and reading level, but also developmental needs. Consider these developmental stages when selecting books:



Preschoolers and Kindergarteners: Children in this stage tend to respond well to traditional nursery rhymes with catchy, rhythmic verses, as well as colorfully illustrated nonfiction books and classic picture books that tell a simple narrative. For read-alouds, books that focus on the world around them and other children their age tend to catch their interest.



First- and second-graders: In these early primary grades, children continue to enjoy read-alouds of picture books, but your child may be ready for simple chapter books that feature illustrations. And your child might be ready to turn the tables and read to you: Start with colorfully illustrated books with a few simple words aimed at helping beginning readers learn to read.



Third-, fourth- and fifth-graders: Older elementary students should be moving gradually into longer chapter books with more complex storylines. They also tend to be ready for a wider variety of genres – from nonfiction and fantasy to historical and science fiction. If you have a reluctant reader, select chapter books with lots of pictures and easy-to-read text. Children at this age also tend to enjoy reading books by the same author or a series of books with the same characters.

What questions can I ask my child to support my child's reading?

Seattle Public Schools offers a series of guides that explain skills to expect and various reading levels and provide questions for families to ask young readers before, during and after reading. Your child's teacher may provide a "Family Guide to Reading Levels," or you may access these guides on our English Language Arts web page:

http://www.seattleschools.org/students/academics/teachingandlearning/language_arts/