



Choosing a Book for your Child

It is never too soon to introduce children to books. Here are some basic points about specific age groups to keep in mind when you are choosing a child's book.

Babies and Toddlers

- Very young children are attracted to brightly colored pictures of simple objects.
- They are listeners, and respond well to books with simple text and good rhythms.
- Wordless books excite them both visually and mentally, and encourage them to create their own stories.
- They are delighted with board books and cloth books, which have the virtue of being practically unbreakable.

Nursery School and Kindergarten

- Mother Goose, nursery stories, and other books depicting familiar objects and experiences are enjoyable to children in this age group.
- These children like listening to slightly complex texts with good rhythm and effective word repetition.
- They are also coordinated enough to have fun with toy-like books that may pop up or move.

Early School Years (Ages 5-8)

- A few children may learn to read before they are in the first grade. Most learn during first grade. Many learn even later.
- For reading to or with children, select picture books with strong storylines and character growth.
- For the child who is reading on their own, choose a book with a straightforward story employing words that will be familiar from every day use. Some publishers produce books, generally called "easy readers" which early readers often enjoy.
- Third-graders are often able to handle stories of some difficulty. The vocabulary should be familiar while including some challenging words.
- A lot of informational books have been published for the early grades. These books encourage children to read about topics that interest them and to satisfy their curiosity about complex subjects.

Older Children (Ages 9-12 and Older)

- Consider the child's personality traits and personal preferences.
- Make your selection with the child in mind; choose an informational book or a novel in an area of specific interest.

The grade level for which a book is most suitable may be indicated on the cover or jacket of the book. Don't hesitate to choose a book that is suggested for someone older than the child you are selecting for. If a book is beyond a child's reading ability, it can be read to him or her now, and later on by the child. It is also possible to find picture books that because of the subject or artwork will be just right for an older child. An interesting story in a beautiful, well-illustrated book offers the child an artistic experience to enjoy over and over again.

Classic stories are often excellent books for the family to read aloud together. Some children find a modern book more appealing than a classic: think of the child's reading enjoyment and select books that will appeal.

Young people love paperbacks. Reprints of hardcover titles for every reading level are widely available as paperbacks. In addition, there are many children's books published only in paperback formats which do not cost as much as hardcover books.

A good book is not necessarily the most decorated or most expensive book on the shelf. It is a book that is written and designed well. Take more than a few minutes to look at the books, and read the whole book or a few passages from them. A book is an unlimited investment in the human mind and spirit. Its selection deserves thoughtful attention.

The Five Finger Rule When Choosing a Book with Your Child

A quick way to check and see if a book is at your child's reading level is to use the Five Finger Rule.

1. Open to any full page from the book.
2. Have your child read aloud from the page.
3. Every time they reach a word they don't know, have them put up a finger.
4. If they put up five fingers or less, the book is ok for them to read.
5. If they run out of fingers on one hand and need more, the book is probably too hard for them to read independently, but it might make a good book for you to read to them.

