

Partners in Learning



Whether you're in a bookstore, at the public library, or looking through a collection of books at home, helping your child choose appropriate reading material can be a challenge. Ideally, children would be reading books that they understand and can read accurately and smoothly, but at the same time offer enough challenge to help them grow in their reading skills.

While it is possible to find books that have been "levelled," limiting children to choosing books at a particular level can harm their motivation for reading. As adults, we would certainly take less pleasure in reading if told we were only allowed to read certain books, which may not match our purpose for reading or our preferences! Motivation, choice and background knowledge are critical to independent reading success.

Children can learn to choose books for independent reading by considering how well the text matches their purpose, interests, comprehension and decoding skills. To assist your child in finding appropriate reading material, have him or her consider the following questions:



Too Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you read the book many times? • Does the story seem simple? • Do you know almost every word? • Can you read it quickly and smoothly?
Just Right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the book new to you? • Do you understand the book? • Are there just a few words on a page you don't know? • When you read, are some places smooth and some choppy?
Too Hard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there more than five words on a page you don't know? • Are you confused about what is happening in most of this book? • When you read, does it sound choppy? • Is everyone else busy and unable to read with you?

The process of searching for the perfect book will be rewarding in itself, as your child will be exposed to many book types and formats and will refine his or her literary tastes. If assistance in finding appropriate reading material is needed, encourage your child to consult the librarian or his or her classroom teacher for recommendations. Providing your child with support in determining whether or not a book is a "good fit" will promote independence and a lifelong love of reading.

