

Parents' Guide to Reading Levels

Choosing books at the appropriate level is important.

- If a book is too hard, your child may become frustrated. If a book is too easy, they might find it boring or babyish. Neither will reach the goal of growing a child who loves and values reading.
- Levels are designed to be helpful and point kids to materials that they are ready to read, not stressful for you or your child.

Children learn at their own pace.

- Although charts of the different Reading Level systems attach an age or grade level, don't become obsessed with comparing your child's levels to the lists.
- Within your child's class there will be a great range of reading levels.

Elementary teachers do Reading Level assessments on all students.

- Your child's teacher is a good source to find out your child's current reading level. Tests are done throughout the year.

A quick way for you to judge if a book is too hard or easy is the "Five Finger Rule."

- Have your child turn to any page in a book, and each time they come to a word they don't know, hold up a finger.
- Five fingers up, the book will probably be frustrating.
- Four fingers up, will be a challenge. But, if your child is motivated to read that particular book, offer to help them with words that are new.
- Two or three fingers are in the sweet spot.
- One finger or none signifies the book is probably too easy.

Here are two common ways Reading Levels are listed:

Lexile Measurement. Lexile is based on a measure of the complexity of a text based on sentence length and word frequency. Here are the measures for K-4. Note the overlap.

Kindergarten 40-230

1st Grade : 120-295

2nd Grade: 107-545

3rd Grade: 415-760

4th Grade: 635-950

Guided Reading Level. The Guided Reading Level is an alphabetic system that has several levels for each grade. It allows teachers to tailor reading accurately to the wide range of student reading in any classroom. The leveling is based on standards developed by Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell that consider text difficulty, vocabulary and developmental appropriateness. Here is the alphabetic system for K-4.

Kindergarten: A-D

1st Grade: D-J

2nd Grade: J-M

3rd Grade: M-P

4th Grade: Q-S

***A Librarian's Tip** - To find a Guided Reading or Lexile Level, type in a "book title" and "guided reading level" or "lexile" to your favorite browser.