

Building the School-Age Library

Leveled Readers

Many school districts require students to read books that fall into the reading level appropriate for their grade and abilities. These are typically referred to as easy readers or early chapter books. They are usually set up like a chapter book, but have fewer words on a page. They also contain sight words and age-appropriate vocabulary. Most book publishers will put a “level” number on the cover of the book; however, not all levels are the same across publishers. You can use online tools to find out the book’s level to help children pick the right-fit book.

The most widely used book leveling measures are:

- **Grade Level Equivalent:** This is simply giving the book a developmentally appropriate grade level match. A level of 2.3 would be: 2nd Grade, Month 3
- **Guided Reading:** A common leveling system used by schools. This leveling system gives the book a letter, which will correspond with a grade level, see the link below for a comparison chart.
- **Developmental Reading Assessment Levels (DRA):** A common leveling system used by schools and book publishers. This leveling system will give the book a number, which will correspond with a grade level, see the link below for a comparison chart.
- **Leveled Readers: Comparison Chart:** [Refer to the website listed in the Learn section of Lesson 4 in the School-Age Communication & Language Development course to access this resource.](#)
- **Leveled Readers: Scholastic Book Wizard:** To check the levels of easy readers, you can use the Scholastic Book Wizard, which is an online tool designed to help find the right-fit books for children. You can look up a book’s level, or even get a list of books on the same level to use when purchasing materials for your program’s library. [Refer to the website listed in the Learn section of Lesson 4 in the School-Age Communication & Language Development course to access this resource.](#)

Accelerated Reader

This is a system that is separate from the three systems mentioned above. It levels books and offers reading comprehension tests that are commonly used in schools. To check the level of an AR book, [refer to the website listed in the Learn section of Lesson 4 in the School-Age Communication & Language Development course.](#)

Chapter Books

Chapter books also have a level that can be used to help children find the right-fit book for them. You can also access this information through the Scholastic Book Wizard link above. The level for chapter books is called Lexile. It will give a number range that will correspond with a grade level.

When helping a child choose a chapter book, it is important to keep in mind that while a child may have the reading skills needed for a particular title, they may lack the maturity to understand the subject matter. There are online tools available to help check this information before putting a specific title in your collection.

Common Sense Media

This Common Sense Media website provides reviews and rates books on areas such as language, mature content, positive role models and messages. You can search by title, age or subject matter. [Refer to the website listed in the Learn section of Lesson 4 in the School-Age Communication & Language Development course to access this resource.](#)

Libraries

Most public and school libraries have resources available to their patrons which will allow them to search for titles based on age, grade and reading level. There will also be resources on how to help children pick a book and what to look for in quality reading material. Helping Children Choose the Right- Fit Book There are a variety of easy tools and questions to ask to help children pick the right -fit book. A good book should be a combination of words that are easy for children to understand and some that are a challenge. The subject matter should be interesting to the child and the length should be attainable.

Five Finger Rule

A common tool is the Five Finger Rule used mainly for chapter books.

1. Choose a book that you think you will enjoy.
2. Read the second page.
3. Hold up a finger for each word you are not sure of or do not know.
4. If there are five or more words you did not know, you should choose an easier book.

Questions to ask when choosing a book

Read two or three pages and ask yourself these questions:

1. Will it be an easy, fun book to read?
2. Do I understand what I am reading?
3. Do I know almost every word?
4. When I read it aloud, can I read it smoothly?
5. Do I think the topic will interest me?

If most of your answers were "yes", this will be an easy book to read independently by yourself.

1. Will this book be too hard for me?
2. Are there five or more words on a page that I don't know, or am unsure of?
3. Is this book confusing and hard to understand by myself?
4. When I read it aloud, does it sound choppy and slow?

If most of your answers were "yes," this book is too hard. You should give yourself more time before reading this book. Give the book another try later, or ask an adult to read the book to you.