



# How to Choose a “Just Right” Book

Literacy Collaborative

# The Power of Choice

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- Choice is a powerful and motivating teaching tool. But young children need help learning how to make good reading choices. Book-matching strategies helps students select appropriate books independently. Students explore the different purposes readers have and how to determine what their purpose for reading is. Students also learn how to evaluate whether a book is at the right reading level and length for their abilities. (*ReadWriteThink.org*)

# Why is Choosing a Book Important?

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- Choosing a book is an important skill that children need to become good readers. Children who find a book that's just right for them are able to engage with the text without becoming mired by difficult words or concepts. This allows them to be free to ask questions, make predictions and inferences, and make connections to their own experiences.
- Remind your child the finding a book that is just right can be difficult and they should not feel discouraged if they think the book is too hard. Not every book is appropriate for everyone.

# How Can We Find “Just Right” Books?

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- Book recommendations can come from teachers, family members, librarians, bookstores, and friends. Many classes participate in book clubs where children can swap books or have exposure to a wide range of books. Children learning at home can find book reviews written by other children online. Even children's magazines offer book suggestions for different reading levels. Encourage your children to think of sources where he or she can learn about good books.

# When Choosing Books

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There are several ways a child can figure out if a book is “just right” for them:

- \*Share the inside jacket or back cover to evaluate whether or not it may have difficult thematic elements

- \*Encourage your child to read the first few pages to you to assess level of difficulty.

- \*Select several books to bring home so your child can “abandon” a book if it turns out to be too easy or too difficult.

- \*Use the “5 Finger Rule:” If there are more than 5 difficult words on the first page, chances are this book is not on your child’s reading level.

# An “Easy” Book

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- You can read the words fluently (smooth and with an interesting voice)
- There often are not a lot of words on a page
- You know how to say all the words
- There are not a lot of pages in the book
- You have a lot of schema for the subject
- Sometimes the book has a larger font
- You totally understand the story
- Your reading rate may be quicker
- Your thinking comes easy as you read the words

# A “Challenging” Book

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- Many of the words are too hard to decode (failed a five finger test)
- You don't know what the tricky words MEAN
- Your reading becomes choppy more than it is fluent
- You don't have any prior knowledge the subject
- There are often a lot of words on the page
- Often the font is small
- You lose focus as you are reading
- You are not enjoying the book because you have to do too much word work
- Your thinking is confused
- Your reading rate slows way down

# A “Just Right” Book

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- You can read most of the words
- You can understand what you are reading
- You enjoy the book
- You may have some schema for the subject
- You can read the book with smooth fluency but there are some choppy places
- Your reading rate is just right- not too slow and not too fast
- You can figure out the tricky words and still get the meaning of the story