

Give the Gift of Reading

How to choose good books for children of all ages

Every time your children read, they open a new door for their future. Books make perfect gifts in they can inspire children, expand their imaginations, and help them learn. There are many ways to encourage reading, but experts agree that two things are essential:

- **Access to books.** Encourage children to choose reading by making lots of books available in your home. Make it easier to pick up a book than to grab the television remote control.
- **Good books.** Help children by providing books that will captivate their attention, and you will help them discover the joy of reading. And the more they *like* to read the more they *will* read.



What makes a children's book good? The best books generate enthusiasm for reading. They interest the children who read them and makes them want to read more.

Some books, for example, appear again and again on lists of recommended children's reading; they appeal to many youngsters and have won the respect of librarians and educators.

These books are a great place to start, and the resources found in this guide can steer you to them. But the real test of a good book is your children's reactions to it. Take your cue from them. Trust your instincts and your children's judgment as you explore the world of children's literature together. Below and on the reverse are some tips to get you started.

Infants and Toddlers (Birth to Age 3)

Look for:

- Durable books, such as board books, with sturdy pages that can be wiped clean. Babies can easily turn the stiff, heavy pages.
- Simple, clear, vivid pictures with or without printed words.
- Stories told in short, simple sentences with pictures that explain the text.
- Poems and rhymes that are fun to read aloud.
- A-B-C and number books with pictures of familiar objects.
- Sensory appeal, such as fabric books, books with textures, and books with scents.

Continued on reverse

Preschoolers (Ages 3 to 6)

Look for:

- Stories about everyday events and experiences, such as going to a friend's house.
- Simple, active plots that move quickly, so each book can be read in one sitting.
- Main characters about the same age as, or slightly older than, your child.
- Playful animals, both real and imaginary, and funny creatures in ridiculous situations.
- Stories and books that repeat key words and catchy sentences or phrases.
- Colorful illustrations. The images can get more detailed as your children mature.
- Stories with one or two sentences per page for beginning readers; as your child's skills increase, introduce longer stories.

Young Readers (Ages 6 to 9)

Encourage children to help select the books they will read on their own and the ones you will read together. For books that young children will read on their own, look for:

- Illustrations that bring the text to life and give clues to the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- How-to, craft and recipe books with clear, simply worded instructions and helpful illustrations.
- Books that you read aloud when the children were younger; they can read them on their own now.

For books to read aloud to young children, look for:

- Stories and poems about subjects that interest children but are beyond their reading level or are longer than those they can read on their own.
- Selections from books your children could read on their own but haven't yet discovered.

Preteens (Ages 9 to 12)

Look for:

- Accurate information on any subject that interests your children.
- Humorous exaggeration.
- Bonds of loyalty among characters.
- Stories that show young people actively solving problems and overcoming odds.
- Chapter books that will be read over several days instead of in one sitting.
- Fact books, such as world record books, trivia, and sports books.
- Biographies, classics, folk tales, historical fiction, and mythology.

Five Tips for Choosing Good Books for Children of All Ages

- 1 Encourage children to help select their own books as soon as they start showing preferences. Hand a young child a pile of familiar books so he or she can choose which one you'll read aloud. Let older children browse in a library, bookstore, or yard sale and pick their own books.
- 2 Ask relatives and friends what books their children like. Share and trade books.
- 3 Steer children toward books about their favorite subjects and interests. Look for books in which characters address fear and feelings that will help children with their own experiences.
- 4 Get to know the children's section of your local library, and ask the children's librarian for recommendations.
- 5 Experiment and have fun. Try books on new or unfamiliar subjects. Show your enthusiasm for reading, and children will follow your lead.

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Reading Is Fundamental,
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