

Understanding Reading Levels When Helping Your Child Choose a Book

In order for your child to have fun and success with his or her reading, the book must not only be interesting but at the appropriate level for him or her.

The reading level mentioned in his or her progress report, and the level at which his or her school reading program is planned, is the INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL. This is the level where the child recognizes 90 out of 100 words and comprehends at least 75% of the material.

The level at which your child should generally be reading for leisure and pleasure is his or her INDEPENDENT LEVEL. This level is always lower than the level he or she is being instructed on and, in fact, it may be as much as one full grade level below the Instructional Level. On this level he or she recognizes 95% of all the words and comprehends 90% of the material. This is the easy reading level where he or she can read without teacher or parent help.

A child develops confidence from success in easy reading. If he or she knows almost all the words, it is possible to figure out the others and go on. Generally if the reading level is right for your child, he or she will "try out" the book.

For the young child, you can show him or her a simple way to help decide if the book is too hard. Have your child read a page or two from the middle of the book. Every time he or she comes to an unfamiliar word, have him or her put down a finger from one hand. If he or she makes a fist, the book is probably too hard.

Your child also has a FRUSTRATION LEVEL. At this level the material is too difficult. He or she recognizes less than 90% of the words, and comprehension is less than 75%. Guide your child and help him or her avoid choosing books on this level.

In addition to the reading levels above, your child also has a LISTENING COMPREHENSION LEVEL. This is the level of material your child can listen to and understand when you read to him or her. Comprehension should be at least 75%. Keep this level in mind when you read to your child. Your child may be able to listen to and understand books on a higher grade level than he or she is reading on.

If you are interested in having a list of books that correspond to your child's reading level, please contact Mrs. Fruth in the Reading Lab at 683-4842, ext. 247.

Ways To Develop Your Child's Vocabulary

Research indicates that the best way of learning new words is through direct experiences. The more experiences your child has, the richer his or her vocabulary, and life, will be.

1. Keep a dictionary next to the area where you and your children eat meals. Often new words will come up in conversation. While your child may not be in the habit of looking words up in the dictionary, he or she will be only too delighted to have you look it up. Your child is the winner; his or her word knowledge grows.
2. Use dinner time to use new words deliberately. Explain the meaning of the word, and try to use it again later on so your child will remember it.
3. Take trips with your child, and talk to him or her about what you are seeing and doing.

Information taken from Transitions: From Literacy to Literature
by Regie Routman