

Reading Levels for Kids

Knowing if a book is too easy, too hard, or just right can be tricky. Many books aren't labeled with reading levels and different publishers use different level definitions. Use the tips below to help you figure out whether the book you have in hand is the right reading level for you!

The "Goldilocks Method"

for Kindergarten through 3rd grade

When you are reading a book, try asking yourself these questions:

TOO EASY

- Have you read this book many times before?
- Do you know and understand almost every word?
- Can you read it smoothly without much practice or effort?

JUST RIGHT

- Is this book new to you?
- Are there a few words per page that you don't recognize or know the meaning of instantly?
- Can someone help you if you reach a tough spot?

TOO HARD

- Are there more than a few words on a page that you don't recognize or know the meaning of?
- When you read, are you struggling and does it sound choppy?
- Is everyone busy and unable to help you if you hit a tough spot?

The "Five Finger Method"

for 4th through 6th grades

Try out this test before you spend too much time with a book and get frustrated:

1. First, choose a book you think you would like to read.
2. Find a page of text in the middle of the book without too many pictures.
3. Begin to read the page out loud so you can hear when you have difficulty.
4. Each time you come to a word (not a character's name!) you don't know, hold one finger up.
5. If you have all five fingers up before the end of the page, this book may be too hard for now. Try coming back to it later or asking an adult for help.
6. If you have no fingers up by the end of the page, the book may be an easy read for you.
7. If you have two or more fingers up but less than five by the end of the page, this may be just what you need to grow as a reader!

There's nothing wrong with going back to an old favorite every so often or with giving yourself a challenge, you just want most of your books to be ones that you can read, and which will help you build new reading skills. You can always go back to a book that was too hard either when you've built up your skills or when you have an adult to help you out!

