

RIF'S GUIDE TO CHOOSING GOOD BOOKS FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES



Reading Is
Fundamental

A guide for parents from Reading Is Fundamental®

Access to good books is the first step to discovering the joy of reading. The more trips you make to the library together, the more likely your child will want to choose a book from the stacks. The more books you have in your home, the more likely your child will pick one up and read it.

But how do you know which books are the right ones to bring into your home or to check out of the library? Just turn the page. This guide offers tips and strategies to help you and your child learn how to choose good books together.

What is a good book?

A book doesn't have to win an award to be considered "good." It doesn't have to be a best seller or on a recommended booklist, either.

A good book is simply one a child enjoys reading.

How can you find good books?

Libraries, bookstores and yard sales are filled with books. But how do you know which ones are good? Trust your instincts. Keep your child's interests and reading level in mind. And use the tips listed in this guide to help you in your search.

What do kids know?

A lot. So ask them. Kids can tell you what they like and don't like, what they want to learn, who they would like to meet and what they want to do when they grow up. All of these are the subjects of great books. Your children's input will help you guide them to good books.

Take the mystery out of choosing good books

Children's reading interests and needs change as they grow. Here are some basic things to look for as you help kids at any age choose good books.

Infants and toddlers (Birth to age 2)

- Books with big, bright, colorful pictures of familiar objects.
- Durable books made of cardboard, plastic or washable cloth. These books are usually a good size and shape for small children to handle.
- Books that appeal to their senses, such as fabric books, books with textures and books with scents.
- Stories told in short, simple sentences with pictures that explain the text.
- Poems and rhymes that are fun for parents to read aloud.

Preschoolers (Ages 3 to 5)

- Illustrations and photos that are clear, colorful and engaging.
- Simple, fun plots. The action should move quickly, so each book can be read in one sitting.
- Lively rhymes and repetition that children can repeat and remember.
- Stories about everyday life and events. The stories should encourage children to ask questions and explore their world.
- Stories that review basic concepts, such as letters, numbers, shapes and colors.
- Main characters who are your child's age or slightly older. Playful animals, both real and imaginary, will also hold a child's attention.

YOUNG READERS (AGES 6 TO 11)

- Clear text that is easy to read.
- Colorful, attractive illustrations and photos that bring the text to life and give clues to the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Books that appeal to your child's interests.
- "How-to," craft and recipe books with clear, simply worded instructions and helpful illustrations.
- Other books by your child's favorite authors and illustrators.



- ### Adolescents (Ages 12 and up)

- ## Quick tips

- Get to know the children's section of your local library and ask the children's librarian for recommendations. Check lists of recommended books, such as those included on the back of this guide.
- It's okay to look through a book and then decide not to read the whole thing. If you don't like a book after reading a chapter or a few pages, pick another one. Reading is supposed to be fun, not a chore.



Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.

International Reading Association

New York Public Library On-Lion for Kids

Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site

American Library Association

Books about choosing good books

Choosing Books for Children: A Commonsense Guide, Betsy Hearne and Deborah Stevenson. University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Great Books for Boys,
Kathleen Odean. Ballantine, 1998.

Great Books for Girls,
Kathleen Odean. Ballantine, 2002.

How to Get Your Child to Love Reading,
Esmé Raji Codell. Algonquin, 2003.

The Read-Aloud Handbook, 6th Edition,
Jim Trelease. Penguin, 2006.

For a complete list of RIF's parent guide brochures, visit www.rif.org/resources.

READING IS FUNDAMENTAL (RIF) motivates children to read by working with them, their parents and community members to make reading a fun and beneficial part of everyday life. For more information, free reading resources and to see how you can support RIF, visit www.RIF.org.

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