

Guide to Choosing Books for Home

Knowledge about and love for literacy can develop only through experience.

Children should own books, should have access to books in their preschool and primary classrooms, should be read to often, and should see others reading and writing.

Understanding the value of literacy as a means of communication, as well as coming to love book-readings as a time for emotional closeness, is an accomplishment typical of the future good reader.

Research proves that literacy success in school is driven by positive exposure to and experience with a wide variety of books from infancy on through school years.

When parents read to children before they start school, their vocabulary grows, they learn to comprehend information that they hear, and they become aware that those black marks that moms or dads look at give information (print awareness). Soon this progresses to awareness that print moves left to right, you access information front to back in a book, and sounds make up words (phonemic awareness). It goes without saying that reading exclusively from the morning paper or cookbook to a toddler is not going to help, but what should you read? The following information is for you to use as a guide and resource when you purchase those books for your preschool child and read to them.

- Look at the age of your child.
- Look at your child's interests
- Look for a good mix to fiction and nonfiction books.

- Choose a wide variety of literature (poetry, picture books, and ABC book, books with rhyme and repetitions know a Predictable books, books with a classic storyline.

A child's age determines the types of book.

Infants focus on bright objects, pictures, and love to touch and feel. They do not have book-handling skills, so the experience is most beneficial if they can experience a book with more than one of their senses. A book like Pat the Bunny by D. Kunhardt is an example of this. Most things move to infants mouths. Purchase books that are small enough for an infant to grasp, not damaged by gumming or saliva, and are simple and brightly colored. Cloth, bathtub, and books children can experience visually and by touch are great at this age. Choose a book also that has pictures that allow you to label the items as this helps build a vocabulary. If the book fosters conversation about fears, feelings or interactions with the reader, it would be a good addition to the library. At this age book, time is established as a nurturing, warm and close time to be spent with a primary care giver.

Toddlers need books that they can grasp and turn the pages. At this stage most of the reading done is labeling objects on the printed page. At all stages, the books and print should be from a variety of sources. By this, I mean that reading (labeling pictures) a bird book or magazine can be just as valuable as a well-illustrated simple picture book. A child of this age will seldom be able to follow a story line, but will love chiming in with repeated sounds, rhymes, or phrases.

Many of the reasons for choosing books for infants are also important for toddlers.

Threes and Fours

This is the age for entertaining stories, books with repeated phrases, rhyming stories, clear illustrations, poetry, interesting information, classics and ABC books. Children especially enjoy a book that tells about feeling or areas that they have experienced. For example, if you have recently visited an aquarium a well-illustrated book about fish will be a hit. If you have observed a construction sight, a book on machines will fascinate a child. This is a time for good literature. Characters and setting are evident, and a problem is established and resolved in the story. Most fiction books have a similar format, although the plot and characters become more involved as the reading becomes more mature. Predictable books that children memorize quickly because of repeated phrases are fun for children because they love to read; share the experience with you. When choosing an ABC book, be careful to choose books that are not confusing in their format. In other words, they give too much information for the child to realize that each letter is represented by illustrations and story.

Kindergarten and on through Primary Grades

The same format continues as children progress through the grades. Although ABC books are read less as the child matures, they are still of prime importance in kindergarten and first grade to help the child become more phonemically aware. When children begin to read on their own, add books to their

library that broaden their interests across the academic field. Choose books that help them learn faith concepts, cultural diversity, science topics, and topics that address art, music, math, careers, geography and the list continues.

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