

Getting Started with Leveled Reading

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What is leveled reading?

Leveled books are the key component in a guided reading program. Guided reading is an approach to teaching reading that uses small-group instruction and developmentally appropriate books (leveled readers).

What are benchmark books?

Benchmark books are assessment tools in a guided reading program. The child is given a book he or she has never seen (a benchmark book) and asked to begin reading. The teacher records the child's reading behavior. If a child is able to read with 95% accuracy and respond well to a series of comprehension questions, he or she can progress to the next reading level.

What does 95% accuracy mean?

Each person has 3 reading levels. They are the recreational reading level, instructional level, and the frustration level. Percentages are given to indicate the placement of the child at the different levels. The recreational level is reading with 95-100% accuracy. The instructional level is reading with 90-94% accuracy. While the frustration level is reading with 89% or less accuracy.

How do I find leveled books at the library?

Different reading programs use various letter and number systems. Many leveled books that are used in schools are written especially for a particular reading series. These books are not trade books and would more than likely not be found at the public library. Most books appropriate for a beginning reader will be found in the reader (or easy reader) section of the public library.

What are the characteristics of the different stages of reading?

(The letters are Scholastic's leveling system and the numbers are Reading Recovery's leveling system):

Emerging Reader (levels 1, 2, A)

[Example: Kelli Foster's A Mop for Pop.]

- Understands basic concepts of print (including direction of the text and the concept of a word)
- Knows some letter sounds and names
- Recognizes some familiar words in other contexts
- Can do word-to-word matching

- Reads books with very brief captions that describe familiar objects or events and are supported by strong illustrations
- Understands the concept of story
- Books may have 10 words or less per page

Beginning Reader (levels 3-6, B)

[Example: P.D. Eastman's Go, Dog, Go!]

- Knows small number of words by sight
- Can name most letters and sounds
- Relies on picture clues, rhyme, repetition, familiar words, and knowledge of beginning sounds to read
- Reads books that tend toward a story line with one or two lines of text on a page
- Often reads word by word
- Finger points
- Books may have 15 words or less per page

Developing Reader (levels 7-16, C)

[Example: Else Minarik's Little Bear.]

- Often knows a large core of words by sight
- Reads books with brief stories that have a beginning, middle, and end
- Uses a variety of strategies including phonetic clues, picture clues, and sentence sense (sounds right) clues
- Reads silently for brief periods, verbalizes when reading is difficult
- Shows independence and confidence with familiar or predictable books

Expanding Reader (levels 17-20, D)

[Example: Marjorie Sharmat's Nate the Great.]

- Reads early reader books with longer stories
- Relies on print more than illustrations
- Uses multiple reading strategies
- Frequently self-corrects when reading aloud
- Reads silently for 15 or 20 minutes

Moderately Fluent Reader (level E)

[Example: Ann Cameron's Stories Julian Tells.]

- Reads beginning chapter books
- Shows independence, but still may need support with unfamiliar materials and genres
- Is beginning to draw inferences from stories in order to comprehend the message
- Pays attention to punctuation and dialogue when reading aloud
- Reads silently for longer periods of time

Fluent Reader (level F)

[Example: Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House in the Big Woods.]

- Reads a greater variety of longer, and more complex, books and materials
- Reads books with smaller print and fewer illustrations that tend to enhance, rather than contribute to, the meaning
- Reads and understands most new words but may need support when dealing with unfamiliar concepts
- Reads silently for extended periods

Advanced Reader (level G)

[Example: Jane Yolen's Dragon's Blood.]

- Reads most children's chapter books
- Chooses novels and series of favorite authors
- Uses reference books independently
- Identifies and discusses literary elements (plot, setting, character) but may need support to interpret themes and character development

This continuum is based on Scholastic's Ready-to-Use: Primary Reading Assessment Kit. Scholastic adapted the continuum from various sources, including The Primary Language Record by Myra Barnes, et al (Heinemann, 1988).