

Guidance for Your Elementary Child's Reading Journey

What should my child be reading? Why doesn't my child want to read? What is the best way to find AR books? What is the reading counts program? What are the most popular series for kids these days?

If you have come into the library with these or other questions, you are not alone! We see caregivers and parents every day who are seeking guidance to help their children become lifelong readers. The staff at the Fayette County Public Library wants to help you on this important journey. The most important thing to do to help with these questions is to bring your child to the library and allow them to browse the shelves and see what interests them the most. The biggest factor in determining if a child will finish reading a book is if they are interested in and able to understand the content. Time and time again research has shown that readers who have access to a wide variety of reading materials and are allowed to choose what they most want to read are the ones who become lifelong readers.

Probably the next most important thing is to have a toolbox full of resources and ideas to provide suggestions for reading material for children at various reading levels. That is where this handout comes in!

1. Reading R.A.C.K. at the Fayette County Public Library (Reading Advice for Caregivers and Kids.)
We have developed a series of notebooks with reading lists and other information to guide your child in their reading. Need a list of great series for your second or third grader? We have it! Want a list of classic chapter books for children? What about books that were turned into movies? Award winners? We have those too! Come check out this great new tool.
2. Take the time to learn and become very familiar with the websites listed below.

What Kids Are Reading

<http://www.renlearn.com/whatkidsarereading/>

Brought to you by the people who do accelerated reading, this annual report highlights what kids are reading by age, gender, reading level, etc. Great resource!

Children's Choices

<http://www.reading.org/Resources/Booklists/ChildrensChoices.aspx>

A reading list with a twist! Children themselves evaluate the books and write reviews of their favorites. Since 1974, Children's Choices have been a trusted source of book recommendations used by teachers, librarians, parents—and children themselves. The project is cosponsored by International Reading Association and the Children's Book Council.

Juvenile Books in a Series

<http://www.mymcpl.org/books-movies-music/juvenile-series>

This database contains over 28,000 books in 3,700 series titles that are classified into three audiences: Juvenile Easy [JE] – for birth through 2nd grade readers, Juvenile [J] – for 2nd through 6th grade readers, Young Adult [YA] – for 6th through 12th grade readers. You can view listings by series title, series subject, book title and book author.

Association for Library Service to Children

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/awardsgrants/notalists/index.cfm>

This association is the division of the American Library Association that focuses on children. The above links take you to lists of award-winning and notable books.

Reading Rockets

<http://www.readingrockets.org>

Reading Rockets is a national multimedia project offering information and resources on how young kids learn to read, why so many struggle, and how caring adults can help.

The Lexile Framework

<http://www.lexile.com>

Students taking the CRCT and other tests are being given a Lexile score to help guide their reading. This site explains what Lexile is all about and lets you find out the Lexile scores for your books or select books that fall in certain score ranges. The Lexile system is computer generated and only considers word frequency and sentence length in making its recommendations. Use with care as there are a lot of inconsistencies in scoring of materials.

Scholastic's Reading Counts

<http://src.scholastic.com>

Fayette County Public Schools are moving from AR to this Scholastic program, but even if your school has not yet changed over, this is a great site for helping find books. It gives you Lexile scores and reading levels and there is a book wizard that allows you to put in the name of a book you read and find other books similar to it at the same reading level or at a level a little higher or lower.

AR Book Finder

<http://www.arbookfind.com>

AR Book Finder allows you to search for books by title, author, topic or interest level. Information provided includes AR reading level, points, mini-reviews and summaries of the books.

Book Adventure (Created by Sylvan Learning)

<http://www.bookadventure.org>

Book Adventure is a FREE reading motivation program for children in grades K-8. Children create their own book lists from over 7,000 recommended titles, take multiple choice quizzes on the books they've read, and earn points and prizes for their literary successes.

Fayette County Public Library, 770-305-5328
1821 Heritage Park Way, Fayetteville, GA 30214
For more information contact: Ada Demlow, Children's Librarian
ademlow@fayettecountyga.gov, 770-305-5351,
www.fayettecountyga.gov/public_library/

Where are your books for 4th graders? (or 1st graders, 2nd graders,)

Questions about books for specific grade levels are probably the most common questions we get in the children's department. In the last two decades the increased use of reading programs like Accelerated Reader and Reading Counts have created a push for parents and teachers to help students find books "at their level". So you may wonder; why doesn't our library just organize the books by grade or Lexile and make it easier for folks to find books according to their child's grade or score?

There are a lot of practical reasons we don't organize our shelves by grade or level, but the biggest reason is our commitment to children and their reading development. A child's grade level is certainly one factor to use in helping them find reading material, but there are also many other factors to consider. To focus only on grade level or "score" level is potentially detrimental to the development of lifelong reading habits. Reading is a highly personal journey that should allow the opportunity for students to make discoveries about themselves and the world around them. In other words, reading is not just an academic activity that should only be tied to grades and test scores, but is also strongly connected to a child's life, personal experiences, and aspirations.

Research has consistently shown that children who are offered print rich environments in which they get to be an active part in selecting reading material are more likely to be successful, lifelong readers. Our goal in the children's department is to make available a wide variety of interesting materials and provide tools and guidance for individual children and families in finding the books and resources that would be most enjoyable and meaningful for them.

Of course, we realize that there is a practical truth that a child's age and grade play a big part in the kind of topics and books they are interested in. So we have set up the library and created resource/book lists to help you find just what you are looking for keeping in mind both grade levels and reading interests. Libraries are for exploring, and we invite you to come and explore with your child. We are here to help. Listed below are some of the main sections of the library.

Beginning Readers—These books have a more limited vocabulary and are good for children in the early stages of learning to read. Children who are just learning to read benefit from a combination of learning to read these books and having books from our picture book and chapter book sections read out loud to them.

Picture Books—These books rely on both pictures and text to tell the stories. Some of these are designed to be read out loud to young children. Others are simple enough for younger readers to tackle on their own. We have lists of great read-alouds and picture books that are good for beginning readers. It is important to note that picture books are not just for young readers. We have many picture books with challenging text and high-interest stories appropriate for 3rd, 4th and 5th graders. Ask about our list of picture books for older readers to help you get started.

Chapter Book Fiction—These are novels for children are organized by author. Most of the readers of these books fall in 2nd—6th grades, although there are exceptions both above and below this range. We have created a lot of lists to help guide you in this area. Some are by interest area as in mysteries, sports fiction, animals stories, etc. Others are by grade level. Just keep in mind that for the grade level lists you will want to take a look at the lists just above and below their grade as most of these books are appropriate for many grades.

Chapter Book Nonfiction—These books are organized by subject according to Dewey Decimal numbers. If your child has some favorite subject areas, learn those numbers as any public library you go to will have books about that subject in the same number. Most of these books are in the 2nd—6th grade range but we do have quite a few that are also appropriate for use with children in Pre-K—first grade. For some children non-fiction is their main entry into reading as they enjoy finding books about their favorite sports team, animal, race car, etc.

Other important things to remember:

Reading out loud to children should not end once they become proficient readers. Reading to children throughout their life is highly beneficial because it creates a wonderful time of bonding, and also helps increase comprehension and knowledge.

Use book levels sparingly, focusing more on interests and past reading experiences. If you are worried that a book might be too challenging, use the five finger rule. Have your child read the first page of the book and count how many words they don't know. If there are more than five, then the book may be too challenging. However, if they are highly motivated to read the book have them try another page or two to be sure.