

Helping your child to choose the right book

It can be difficult, even as an adult to choose a book which you will want to finish. How often do we give up after a few pages? For children choosing a book which is interesting, reasonably challenging and not too difficult to read can be a real problem. Many fail and either give up quickly or trudge through the book without any enjoyment. The solution? - Children need to learn to P.I.C.K. the right book.....

It's all about teaching them one word that they can keep in their back pocket any time they're in the library or school media center. It's one word they can lean on when they're in the class book corner or at the book fair.

All they need to remember is P.I.C.K.

P.I.C.K. stands for Purpose, Interest, Comprehension, and Know the Words.

P = Purpose: We need to have children consider their purpose for reading. Why are they looking for a book in the first place? Is it totally a free choice, or is there some other reason for reading it?

In order to determine purpose, consider asking:

- Are they reading for pleasure?
- Are they trying to learn something?
- Is the book going to be read silently or out loud?
- Who is their audience?

Most often, purpose for reading can be found with a quick answer.

I = Interest. When choosing a book, it should be something of interest. With the many millions of books on shelves today, there's bound to be something out there for everyone. And emphasizing the interest connections is super-important as well. If the child is

interested in cars, then don't stop at fictional stories about cars; consider books about racetracks, car construction, history of racing, racecar drivers, or car design. If it's magic that intrigues your daughter, then emphasize books about magic shows, magic tricks, and magicians; look for books that involve fantasy, science, and invention.

Even if children have a short amount of time to choose books, they can determine interest by:

- Looking at the front cover
- Flipping through the pages to glance at photos or illustrations
- Reading the back cover
- Reading the chapter titles

C = Comprehend. Is the book something that the child can comprehend? Can he or she understand what's read? Is it a book that is appropriate for his or her level or abilities?

Children are more aware of their reading "level" than we may think, so though we don't want to lean entirely on it, it's okay to remind kids that if they're choosing a book to read independently, and they read at a Level E (for example) that they should not choose a book from the Level M basket. Also, it's important to teach kids that if the book isn't labeled with a level, they can quickly assess if it's an appropriate book for them by opening the book and choosing a page – the book is appropriate for them if they are able to understand what they read.

Children can determine comprehension asking themselves:

- Did I understand what I just read?
- Do I remember what I read?
- Was I able to read most of the words?

This brings us to our final letter: K.

K = Know the Words. Readers should be able to decode -- or read -- and understand the majority of the words on the page. The key is to remembering the "Five Finger Rule."

The "Five Finger Rule" outlines a general idea of how many words a reader should be able to read on each page.

- 0-1 unknown words = book is too easy
- 2-3 unknown words = book is just right
- 4-5 unknown words = book is too difficult

Knowing P.I.C.K. is empowering for children. They want to know how to choose books that fit for them -- books that are enjoyable, fun, and exciting. It's all about giving them the tools they need to be strong, confident readers. Choosing the best book is the starting point.