



What Is Leveled Reading?

Learn how teachers are helping kids become better readers by matching them to the right books at the right time.

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The Importance of Knowing Your Child's Reading Level

Leveled reading removes the "one size fits all" approach to reading, giving each child the opportunity to develop essential skills at his own pace. With leveled reading, your child is usually placed in a group with other children who read at roughly the same level of ability. Rather than having the entire class read the same book (which some students might find too hard and some too easy), leveled reading allows teachers to use a more personalized and precise approach to monitor a child's progress and help them learn to read.

In a nutshell, leveled reading uses various assessment tools to determine **how well your child reads**, and then **matches him/her to books that are challenging enough for him/her to make progress**, but not so hard that he/she will become frustrated, according to Joe Yukish, senior reading advisor to the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University in New York City. Books are categorized into levels of difficulty, which is how a perfect match, based on ability, can be made. There are a number of leveled reading systems utilized in schools across the country, typically beginning in kindergarten; however here at Christ the King we use the Guided Reading Leveling System made famous by Fountas and Pinnell.

Guided Reading Level

At the beginning of the school year, your child will sit one-on-one with his/her teacher and **read from a benchmark book** (one considered standard for the grade). He/She is also asked to **answer questions about the text or retell the story**. The teacher may use a Reading Record to calculate any oral reading mistakes and to help determine a suitable guided reading level and books for your child. "The teacher is looking for the highest level book the child can read with 90% to 95% accuracy and with at least 70% comprehension," says Yukish. Practically speaking, that means your child doesn't miss more than 10 out of every 100 words. For comprehension, it means he/she doesn't miss

more than 7 out of 10 questions. After determining your child's level (under GRL, books run from A to Z, with A being easiest) the teacher will place him/her in a group with other children who are at the same level. The teacher then provides instruction based on his/her observations and teaches reading strategies geared to take students to the next level of difficulty — but children move at their own pace. "Particularly in grades 1 through 3, the level of book the child reads when he/she enters and leaves the grade will be very different," notes Yukish.

How do I know which levels are appropriate for my child?

Some schools purchase between 5-6 copies of the same "leveled texts" so that once a child's level is determined teachers can select from a leveled book collection for guided reading activities. Christ the King is constantly adding to both our school library and our classroom libraries. When selecting books for groups the following criteria is considered.

1. The selection should be easy enough for the child to read independently (90% accuracy).
2. The selection should be interesting to the student.
3. The selection should fit in well with the instruction goals.

Previously read selections should be made available to students so that they can reread them in different situations (pair & share or independently at home).

What is the purpose of leveling books?

When the proper books are selected, students are able to read with approximately 90% accuracy. This enables the students to enjoy the story because there is not an overwhelming amount of "road blocks" that interfere with comprehension. Students focus on the meaning of the story and application of various reading strategies to problem solve when they do hit a road block in their knowledge or reading ability. By providing small groups of students the opportunity to learn various reading strategies with guidance from the teacher, they will possess the skills and knowledge required to read increasingly more difficult texts on their own. Independent reading with comprehension is the GOAL - guided reading provides the framework to ensure that students are able to apply strategies to make meaning from print.

*"In primary grades children are learning to read
and in upper grades they are reading to learn." Anonymous*

FAQs

How can I find the “just right” books for my child?

Tammy Ledenko, a reading specialist with Scholastic, recommends that you ask your child’s teacher what level they are at, and request a list of appropriate books. However, when reading at home, educators say that children should read a **level or two below** the one they read at school, when they are receiving instruction from the teacher. “This will help your child gain confidence and give them a chance to practice the strategies taught in school,” says Ledenko.

How can I help my child become a better reader?

Continue to read to him/her every day and expose them to the language of books. Have them read to you. If they make a mistake, simply tell them the correct word and let them move on. This increases enjoyment and fluency. To increase comprehension, talk about the story after you’ve read it. Try and ask your child higher thinking questions.

Shouldn’t my child be challenged with more difficult books?

The leveled reading system is designed to match your child to a book that isn’t too easy or too hard. When children are given books to read that are too far beyond their ability, they can become frustrated, discouraged, or worse, turned off to reading. (Even if your child has accurate word reading they may find difficulty in answering higher-order questions or conducting a conversation about the text).

If your child wants to read a story that is above her reading level or if you’d like to share a classic that’s more advanced, read it together! Even after he/she is reading independently, your child will get a lot out of having you read to them, including exposure to new vocabulary words and a chance to share an enjoyable story.

Is it possible for my child to skip a level?

Children progress linearly through the levels without skipping. “If a child goes from a level A book to a level D, it means he/she was put in the wrong level to begin with,” notes Ledenko.

How does a teacher bring my child to the next level?

Teachers help students progress, says Yukish, “by identifying the characteristics of each level, and then teaching strategies the child will need to read words and comprehend text at that next level.” This is done, of course, in the context of teaching word recognition (phonics, cueing strategies, sight words, etc.) and comprehension of more complex sentence patterns and stories. Naturally, the lessons will change as your child progresses.

What level should my child be reading at in each grade?

Again, there is a range of levels within each grade. Your child’s teacher can address your child’s current level, and the goals he/she is working on with your child, notes Ledenko.

How are leveled reading assessments different from standardized tests?

Leveled reading assessments are highly individualized. They are intended to give teachers specific information about how well each child is able to read and comprehend the text, and where the child needs help. Standardized tests are geared to assess general achievement and to compare one child's performance with others at the same age or grade.

How are the books leveled?



