

Book Selection Guide

How to find a “just right” book — and what to do when it’s too hard.

The Five Finger Test

Have your child read one page out loud. Put up a finger for every word they cannot read.

Fingers up	What it means
0–1 fingers	Easy. Great for rereading, building speed, and bedtime comfort.
2–3 fingers	Just right. Enough challenge to grow, not enough to quit.
4 fingers	A stretch. Fine if you read it together, taking turns.
5+ fingers	Too hard for now. Read it aloud to them and save it for later.

Match the book to your reader

Stage	Look for
Pre-K – K	Picture books, rhyming books, alphabet books, wordless books to talk through.
Grade 1	Decodable readers, early leveled readers, repeated-pattern books.
Grade 2	Short early chapter books with pictures on most pages.
Grade 3	Chapter book series — series matter: familiar characters build stamina.
Grades 4–5	Longer novels, graphic novels, nonfiction about a real interest.
Grades 6–8	Novels with real themes, biographies, magazines, articles they choose.

When a book is too hard

- Read it aloud to your child — listening builds vocabulary at any level.
- Take turns: you read a page, they read a page.
- Try the audiobook while they follow along in print.
- Find an easier book on the same topic first.

- Let them abandon it. Quitting a book is not quitting reading.

Where to find books free

- Your public library card — also unlocks free ebooks and audiobooks.
- The school library and classroom lending shelf.
- Little Free Libraries in your neighborhood.
- Used book sales and thrift stores — build a home shelf for a few dollars.

Still not sure what to pick? Ask Mr. Reading on the website — tell me your child's grade and what they love, and I'll suggest titles.