

How to Select Books

What to look for when selecting books for babies:

- Simple, clear, and colorful pictures—with or without words
- Bright patterns or pictures with high contrast
- Photographs of babies, people, animals, and other real things
- Rhythm, rhymes, songs, and simple poems
- Stories told with short, simple sentences—minimal text
- Board books easy for little hands to hold
- Cloth or soft vinyl books that are easy to wash and hold

What to look for when selecting books for toddlers:

- Books with objects to name and identify
- Illustrated song books and movement stories
- Stories with sensory appeal—textures, smells, flaps to lift, sounds, etc.
- Stories that get your child to participate by repeating sentences or patterns so your child can “read” with you
- Books that introduce numbers, letters, and colors with simple, clear illustrations that focus on only one concept at a time
- Books with simple stories and predictable endings

What to look for when selecting books for preschoolers:

- Funny characters in silly situations
- Stories about families, friends, school, and relationships
- Books about your child’s feelings and real life experiences—having a new baby, being afraid of the dark, starting school, making friends, etc.
- Stories with more action, description, and narrative arc
- Concept books: counting, alphabet, shapes, opposites, sizes
- Nonfiction with accurate information and detailed pictures
- Books that begin to show them the world beyond their neighborhood, family, and friends

Characteristic of High-Quality Books:

- Quality Content—is it age appropriate, is the topic of high interest to the child, does it meet the other criteria listed above for selecting books?
- Quality printing—is the text and color consistent throughout the book, are the text or illustrations faded/brighter on some pages, does the color seem to be not quite right?
- Quality paper—does it feel like it will rip or fold easily, is like a mass-market adult paperback which will fade easily, absorb liquids really fast and hold in odors like cooking smells or smoke?
- Quality binding—are there staples that will fall out, can you see the glue on the binding, does it seem like it will fall apart if the child isn’t really careful with it, is the cover sturdy or will it rip or fold easily?