

Choosing Quality Books

The goal is not only to raise children who can read; it is to raise children who choose to read.

—Mary Gordon¹

Parents are encouraged to read to their children every day, but this doesn't mean reading just anything. The quality of the literature that you share with children could make the difference between a child who *can* read and a child who *chooses* to read. Good books, shared in a warm and safe environment, promote children's personal, cognitive, moral and social development. Here are a few ideas to help you choose appropriate books for the age of your child. Librarians can also point you towards books that have proven themselves as children's favourites.

Babies to age two years

Goals

- introduce young children to books
- develop perception and hearing using simple, rhythmic, repetitive language
- link objects in the world to objects in the books
- build self-esteem and security (family and routines)

Types of books

- sturdy, chewable cloth or board books with bright pictures of objects that are familiar to the baby

A few examples

- Mother Goose - many versions
- Eric Carle - *The Hungry Caterpillar*
- K. M. Denton - *A Child's Treasury of Nursery Rhymes*
- Eric Hill - *Spot* (series)
- Helen Oxenbury - *Tom and Pippo* (series)
- Margaret Wise Brown - *Good Night Moon*

Ages two to three

Goals

- categorizing, grouping
- colours and shapes
- affirm emerging self identity and sense of self worth
- social development: build on interest in other families and the behaviours and values of others
- stimulate imagination and make believe

Types of books

- large, colourful picture books

A few examples

- Debra Frasier - *On the Day You Were Born*
- Marie-Louise Gay - *Good Morning Sam*
- Teddy Jam - *Night Cars*
- Dennis Lee - *Alligator Pie*
- Leo Lionni - *Little Blue and Little Yellow*
- Sam McBratney - *Guess How Much I Love You*

Ages three to four

Goals

- affirm self worth and that it's okay to make mistakes
- letters and numbers
- counting, classifying and comparing objects
- acceptance of diversity and cultural contributions of home and community
- encourage social skills of sharing, taking turns and identifying and talking about feelings

Types of books

- concept books with large colourful pictures that invite children to compare, classify, group and count a variety of objects

A few examples

- Arnold Adoff - *Black Is Brown Is Tan*
- Molly Bang - *When Sophie Gets Angry*
- Paulette Bourgeois - *Franklin* (series)
- Ted Harrison - *A Northern Alphabet* (and other alphabet books from Tundra Books)
- Robert Heidbreder - *I Wished for a Unicorn*
- Pat Hutchins - *Where's the Baby?*
- Robert Munsch - *David's Father*
- Barbara Reid - *The Party*
- Maurice Sendak - *Where the Wild Things Are*

Ages four to five

Goals

- stimulate memory and vocabulary by telling short, meaningful stories and inviting children to re-tell
- build concepts of sequence and of time, such as day of the week, seasons, etc.
- recognize and handle emotions
- empathy: identify with characters and story

Types of books

- children love storytelling at this age; flannel boards and picture stories are popular too.

A few examples

- Rachna Gilmore - *A Screaming Kind of Day*
- Demi - *One Grain of Rice: A Mathematical Folktale*
- Tomie De Paola - *Strega Nona*
- Angela Johnson - *Tell Me a Story, Mama*
- Robert Munsch - *Ribbon Rescue*
- William Steig - *Spinky Sulks*
- Janet Stevens - *The House that Jack Built*

This resource sheet is based on *Weaving Literacy into Family and Community Life: A Resource Guide for Promoting Literacy in Family Resource Programs* (2000) by Smythe and Weinstein, Ottawa: FRP Canada. For more information and links, see the Canadian Children's Book Centre Web site, www.bookcentre.ca.

¹Keynote speech at the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Frontier College, Toronto, 1999.