

SELECTING BOOKS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

CONSIDER THE SUBJECT MATTER

- Is it **developmentally appropriate**? Can your child understand the concepts? Is the length appropriate?
- Is it **interesting**? **Relevant**? Kids enjoy things that are familiar. They also enjoy books that represent experiences beyond their own. But they will be most engaged with a book that connects to their world in some way.
- Is it **accurate**? Factually? Culturally? Historically?
- Is it **emotionally appropriate**? Is your child “in a good place” to read this book at this time? A child who is having nighttime fears may benefit from avoiding books on the subject for a while; another child might benefit from reading more. (Also, is the content **preachy**? Kids can smell a lesson a mile away.)

CONSIDER THE LANGUAGE

- Is it **rich**? Early readers need words that are simple to decode, but picture books can boost your child’s vocabulary because the pictures provide context.
- Is it **lyrical**? This doesn’t mean it has to rhyme. Is the cadence of the words naturally beautiful?
- Does it **rhyme well**? Rhyming texts increase phonemic awareness and help kids predict and build their confidence. But bad rhyme is counterproductive! Near rhymes or choppy meter make a rhyming book a chore to read.

CONSIDER THE ART

- Is it **developmentally appropriate**? Babies can’t process a “busy” page. They need simple pictures and clean lines. Older children will be confused if the art doesn’t flow left to right, or if the perspective is out of sync.
- Is it **beautiful**?
- Is it **accurate**? (See subject matter)
- Is it **rich**? Does it **illuminate** the text?

CONSIDER YOUR BUDGET

Try to build a **library**, rather than shopping impulsively.

- Look at the amount of money you spend on fast food, video games, movie rentals, or toys. See if you can shift a little.
- Shop library discard sales. Secondhand bookstores are great, too.
- Scholastic Book Orders earn classrooms book-buying dollars
- Shop at garage sales
- Check out books from the library
- Do book swaps with friends and neighbors.

TRY A LIST

- Collections of my favorite books: www.hopevestergaard.com/booknook.php
- Shop with Caldecott and Newbery award lists; Boston Globe Best Books; NewYork Public Library Best Books; Bank Street Best Books
- Read Jim Trelease’s READ-ALOUD HANDBOOK; Esmé Raji Codell’s HOW TO GET YOUR CHILD TO LOVE READING for more great suggestions.