

## Selecting Texts That Are Just Right



### Module Focus

The importance of selecting books that are just right for young readers, considerations for book selection, and the critical role of the book introduction in making books accessible and successful for the readers

### Definitions

**book introduction:** providing opportunities for readers to orient themselves to a new text through engaging their interest, making the purposes for reading clear, and introducing any new concepts or language necessary to establish meaning

**orientation to the book:** the child's aligning of himself or his ideas to the book to be read

**strategic activity:** fast brainwork that a learner calls up to solve problems by searching for solutions (e.g., monitors, searches for information, cross checks, discovers new things, repeats to confirm, revises, chooses among alternatives, evaluates responses, makes appropriate links, self-corrects)

### Factors to Consider When Selecting Books

- Will the children relate to the text (interest, background, enjoyment, etc.)?
- Will the language structures and vocabulary support the children's reading of the text?
- Will the book support and extend the children's use of strategic activities so that they can solve problems and learn more about reading by doing this — not too hard and not too easy?
- Will the children be able to read the text at 90% accuracy or better?

### Factors to Consider When Introducing Books

- What challenges may the children face with this book? (the meaning of the story, tricky language structures, new vocabulary, words to problem solve, etc.)
- How can I make the children familiar with what the text will be about?
- Do I need to familiarize the children with any unusual language structures and unknown words during the introduction?
- What other challenges do I need to support to make the book accessible to the children so they can solve problems successfully and understand the text?
- Which challenges do I want to leave, or partially support, so the children will extend their strategic activity to solve problems with greater independence?

---

## Key Points for Teachers

The texts that teachers select should be ‘just right’ for children. They should be interesting and offer an appropriate level of challenge — not too easy and not too hard. Texts should be within each child’s control and encourage successful problem solving.

After carefully selecting an appropriate text, effective teachers think about the best way to help children orient themselves to this particular text. Introductions will vary according to the text itself and the knowledge the children bring to the text.

The ultimate goal is for children to learn how to take over the responsibility for orienting themselves to new texts as they enjoy becoming successful and independent readers.

---

## Resources

### Related Effective Practices Video Modules

Assessing Through Close Observation — *the role observation plays in selecting and introducing books to children*

Making It Easy To Learn — *the relationship between selecting/introducing books and making it easy for children to learn*

Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activity — *the importance of book selection when considering a child’s current use of strategic activities*

Phrasing in Fluent Reading — *the influence that text selection has on a child’s phrasing and fluency*

Briggs, C., & Forbes, S. (2009). Orientation to a new book: More than a picture walk. *The Reading Teacher*, 62(8), 706–709.

Clay, M. M. (1991). Introducing a new storybook to young readers. *The Reading Teacher*, 45(4), 264–273. Reprinted in Clay, M. M. (1998). *By different paths to common outcomes*. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Dorn, L., French, C., & Jones, T. (1998). *Apprenticeship in literacy: Transitions across reading and writing*. York, ME: Stenhouse.

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Kelly, P. R., & Neal, J. C. (2009). Keeping it easy to learn at higher levels of text reading. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 8(2), 27–36.

*Reading in junior classes* (1985). Wellington, NZ: Department of Education.

## Early Literacy Intervention: Expanding Expertise and Impact

*a Reading Recovery initiative in partnership with the USDE*



**Professional development resources produced by the Reading Recovery Council of North America**

*Early Literacy Intervention: Expanding Expertise and Impact is a Reading Recovery initiative in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education. The goal of the initiative is to focus on developing highly effective teachers and resources for schools for improving the reading and writing abilities of students. Funding for the initiative has been provided through an award from the U.S. Department of Education, under award number U215K090094, for the Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE) Program. The contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.*