

What makes a good book for young kids?

At a glance

- The best way to choose a good book is through your child.
- Good books teach kids things subtly while still telling a great story.
- Good books are authentic, credible and captivating.
- Resist the desire to choose only books you read as a kid.
- Don't worry if the words appear hard; this exposes kids to more complex language in context.

Books with vivid imagery, exciting stories and strong characters will not only entertain your child but set them up to enjoy reading for the rest of their life.

What makes a good book for young kids? Any book they want to read.

"Choosing to read over choosing not to read is the most important aspect of introducing your kids to the world of books," says primary school teacher Rosie Charles. However, just as there are guidelines about how often fast food should be served to kids in comparison with wholesome nutritional food, so it is with books. Good literature tends to have layers and depth to it, which is constantly rewarding. Libby Gleeson Children's author.

What is a good children's book?

Good children's books share qualities with good adult novels, Rosie says. "Firstly, quality writing is never boring. Good children's books, no matter how simple or complex, have a sense of joy. They can make us laugh and cry. Regardless of how young, readers need strong characters who they can relate to and care about."

Good books also teach kids things subtly while still telling a great story. For example, in *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, kids learn about numbers, fruit and days of the week, but it's hardly noticed because they have fallen in love with the illustrations and their newly discovered ability to predict what is going to happen next. Good stories allow kids to explore other worlds and other lives but they are still familiar enough that they see themselves in the characters.

"The best way to know if it is a good book for your child is through your child," Rosie says. "Allow them to reject the books they dislike and encourage them to tell you what it is they do like in others," she says.

Choosing good books for your kids

Children's author and creative writing lecturer Libby Gleeson says when choosing a good book for your kids, parents should "resist the desire to only feed their children the books they loved when they were young". "The world has changed and children have changed," Libby says. "Expose them to books you thought were fabulous as a kid, but don't be too precious. Quite often kids will reject it precisely because you've offered it – they want to find something for themselves." Instead, get to know your child's teacher librarian or join a public library to expand the repertoire of books you know about, or seek out award-winning children's book lists and those from the NSW Premier's Reading Challenge.

Good books have several characteristics. These include being:

Authentic Credible Captivating Exciting.

"Good literature tends to have layers and depth to it, which is constantly rewarding," Libby adds.

What books did you love as a kid? What books do your kids love?

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