

Parenting in Focus: Great presents for children

How does one decide what is a good book for children who haven't even been reading yet?

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Whether it is your child's birthday, a holiday, or your grandchild's birthday, a great gift to give is a book. But how does one decide what is a good book for children who haven't even been reading yet?

Here are some hints for books for babies all the way through kindergarten:

For babies (0-12 months)

- Books with simple, large pictures or designs with bright colors
- Stiff cardboard books or fold-out books that can be propped up in the crib
- Cloth and soft vinyl books that can go in the bath (or be washed) with simple pictures of people or familiar objects
- Board books with photos of other babies
- Small plastic photo albums of family and friends

For young toddlers (12-24 months)

- Sturdy board books that they can carry
- Books with photos of children doing familiar things like sleeping or playing
- Good night books for bedtime
- Books about saying "good-bye" and "hello"
- Books with only a few words on each page
- Books with simple rhymes
- Touch-and-feel books
- Animal books of all sizes and shapes

For older toddlers (24-36 months)

- Books that tell simple stories
- Simple rhyming books that they can memorize
- Bedtime books
- Books about counting, the alphabet, shapes or sizes
- Animal books, vehicle books, books about playtime
- Pop-up books, pull-the-tab books, touch and feel books
- Books with humorous pictures and words

For preschoolers (3-5 years)

- Books about children that look and live as they do, as well as other books about children living very different lives
- Counting books or other “concept” books about things like size or time
- Simple “science” books about things and how they work like planting flowers, using tools or how garbage trucks work
- Books about things in which they have a special interest in such as trains, animals or cooking
- Books about making friends (also books about dealing with challenges of friendships including making up after an argument, dealing with a bossy friend, etc.)
- Books about going to school or to the doctor
- Books about having brother or sisters or books about a new baby coming
- Books with simple text that they can memorize or read

Kindergarten (5-7 years)

- Books about being in school
- Books about making friends
- Books about emotions such as kindness, sadness, sharing and helping

Library resources

This is a good time to (virtually) go to the library and get some ideas. Ask the librarian for ideas based on your child’s interests.

Some of the books the older children in the family used to like are still good books for children today.

Cites on the internet like zerotothree.org regularly list books they recommend.

The key is not the book you pick but how you read it to your child. Make it fun. Ask questions about the characters and see what things your child got from reading the book with you.

Even see which character was their favorite character. That will give you some clues about future books to get for that special little one.

Join us for a zoom presentation on Monday mornings at First Teacher when you can see how other mothers read to their children and involve them in talking about the book.

Call (360) 681-2250 to get the details on how you can participate. Your child would probably enjoy this reading together time also.

Parenting hint: Praise your children openly; reprimand them privately!

Cynthia Martin is the founder of the First Teacher program and former executive director of Parenting Matters Foundation, which publishes newsletters for parents, caregivers and grandparents.