



Tips for choosing books for children

You can play a very important part in helping your children choose the books that will get them 'hooked' on reading and stories. Here are some tips to help you. Try out one tip at a time. See which ones work best for you and your children.

Use your home languages

Books for babies and pre-schoolers should be in their home language wherever possible. Have a go at translating books that have very few words, which are not published in the language you need. Try to find books for older children in their home languages too as any reading enjoyed in home language deepens appreciation, knowledge and the motivation to keep reading.

Books for babies and toddlers

Babies like brightly-coloured pictures or photographs of objects or people with simple text. They love feeling the rhythms of language, and listening to repetition and rhyme. First books that include actions like clapping hands and nodding heads are usually a winner with toddlers. Try to find board books and cloth books because these can be chewed and pulled without falling apart!

Rhythm and rhyme

Young children enjoy vividly illustrated books of

lullabies, wordplay and rhymes. They also enjoy books in which the text has a strong rhythm, or in which phrases are repeated.

Pictures only

Wordless books are a great investment because you get the chance to tell a story in your own way to your children and they then can create their own stories too. Wordless books are a great resource for a multilingual setting, with children and adults who speak different languages.

Familiar and new

Choose some books that reflect things that will be familiar to your children – for example, books in which the homes might look like theirs and where the story lets them explore the kinds of everyday life events they are likely to know about or come across. Choose other books too so that your children become curious about new things and have new experiences. Some of these will be folktales, stories set in different places and cultures or stories about magic and enchantment.

T: +27 (21) 448 6000

E: info@nalibali.org

www.nalibali.org

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Reading with older children

Even children who are able to read independently appreciate being read to. Reading aloud usually means choosing stories that are more complex in language and plot than those they might normally read for themselves.

Some can also be about difficult or sensitive subjects. It's best to vary the choice of books that they can read on their own or to you; books you can read together and books that you can read to them.

Variety is the spice of life

Encourage children to try different kinds of books – school stories, space stories, family and friendship stories, nature stories, stories about history and those about heroes and heroines and great explorers, adventure stories, fantasy, magic and mysteries.

Dealing with life's challenges

Picture books and novels about things that have happened or are happening in your children's lives – like the arrival of a new sibling, parents' divorce or friendship challenges – can help children process their feelings and face their fears. Some books

can also help you to broach possibly embarrassing or sensitive subjects like sex, illness and death in indirect ways.

Reading for information

Information books are not just for older children. There are even many appropriate information books for pre-school aged children. Factual books stimulate curiosity and wonder about our natural and physical world. Reading about the life stories of people who have been involved in things like history, politics, art, music, theatre, medicine and science can be hugely motivating to young people wondering what life is all about. In the process, they broaden their knowledge and understandings and learn about where and how to find information.

Do some research

Ask the librarians at your local library which authors children of a particular age usually enjoy. Also ask them for books in the language/s you prefer. Search on the Internet or in the library for award-winning books, fairytales and folktales from Africa and around the world.

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