

# Getting to Know Your Readers:

## A routine for informal assessment of every student in the first 10 days of school.

One-on-one observation of reading has long been known to provide the most effective and authentic information about students. Taking Running Records is a formal way to gather this information, but a lot can be learned about individual students reading habits and strategies by simply listening to and watching them read as well as having a little chat with them about their reading preferences and routines.

Here's a protocol for getting to observe and assess all of your students during the first couple of weeks of school:

### Before school starts:

Establish a classroom library area and organize the books in some way that allows students to maintain the system themselves. You may choose to organize your books by topic, genre, level, series, or a mixture of all. Baskets work best for organizing because they keep the books contained and the label for the category on the basket can match the sticker you place on each book in that basket. Students love participating in organizing the classroom library and can be recruited to label and sort books, or even look up levels for you on the internet.



Reading is covered in the Common Core Standards under Reading Literature RL 1-10 and Reading Informational Text RI 1-10.  
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Day 1

Introduce the students to the categories of organization in your library. Read aloud a sampling from each category, or perhaps highlight a new category each day. Explain your rules and procedures for selecting books and returning them. Have students role-play or demonstrate these procedures for each other. Consider having the students make signs for the library which list these rules and procedures as well.

Tell the students you would really like to get to know them as readers. Model this by telling them a little about yourself as a reader. Bring in some of your favorite books or reading material, tell the students about when and where you like to read for pleasure.



**Literature** **Informational Text**

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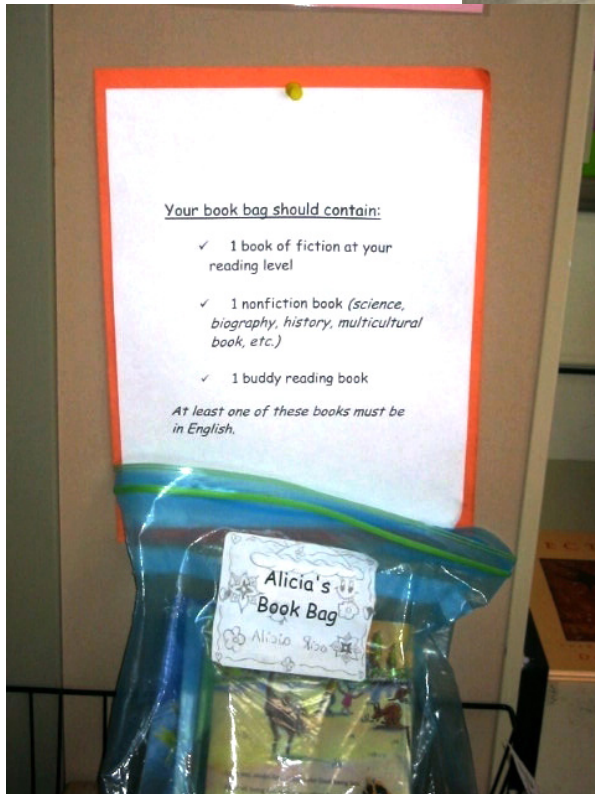




Allow students to explore the library and select 3 books to browse and share with you:

- One that is **just right** for them—reading level not too challenging or too easy, and a topic that interests them
- One that is **too hard** to read, but perhaps is something they'd like to read about or stretch to (a “dream book”)
- One that is really **easy** for them.

You may want to use the posters attached here and/or teach them the “goldilocks” rule of thumb when selecting a just right book.





**Days 2-10:**

Begin meeting with individuals to learn about their reading for about 5 minutes per student. As you meet with each student, the other students are enjoying 20-30 minutes of pleasure reading from the books they have selected. You may allow a short period at the beginning to re-select a book if they don't want to read the ones they selected on day 1.

**Conduct Informal Reading Assessments**

**Step 1:**

Meet with each student in a quiet space in the classroom, ask:

- *What do you like to read about? Do you have a favorite book?*

Ask them to read a page or so from their "just right book" out loud. Make notes about what you notice in terms of

- self corrections—strategy used?
- errors that aren't fixed
- what they do when they get stuck
- did they choose the right level for themselves?
- How is their phrasing? What about fluency?

After the "just right" reading, ask a comprehension question or two to see if they are making meaning while they read. Here are some generic questions to ask:

**Check comprehension:** Literal and interpretive by asking a few questions about what was read.

Here are some sample question stems for each level:

**Literal / Right there in the text** sample questions:

FICTION	NONFICTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who are the main characters?</li> <li>▪ What was ___doing in the beginning of the story?</li> <li>▪ How did ___do ___?</li> <li>▪ What happened after ___?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What was this about?</li> <li>▪ What is something you remember?</li> <li>▪ Tell me about what you learned.....</li> </ul>

**Inferential / between the lines** sample questions:

FICTION	NONFICTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Why do you think ___did ___?</li> <li>▪ What is the character like?</li> <li>▪ How did the author feel about ___?</li> <li>▪ What was the most important thing the story told you about ___?</li> <li>▪ What do you think about the way ___solved the problem in the story? Why?</li> <li>▪ What did the story mean to you?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Why questions.....</li> <li>▪ What did you learn that you didn't already know?</li> <li>▪ What did you notice about how the book was organized?</li> <li>▪ What do you think was the author's opinion about ___?</li> <li>▪ What questions do you still have about ___? How will you find out?</li> </ul>



**Step 2:**

Ask them to read a little from the “dream book” and have them explain why they chose it, take notes. Finally have them read the “too easy” book and make sure to praise their reading.

**Step 3:**

Finish the conference by asking them about favorite topics they like to read about or authors, and asking where and when they read after school.

Repeat this process until you have read with every student. You may be able to meet with as many as 5 in a day, or perhaps fewer.

**Throughout the year:**

Repeat this process with students as possible. You may want to consider a routine which includes conducting an informal reading conference with one or two students daily during silent reading which would allow you to read with every student every 3-6 weeks. Ongoing conferences do not need to include all of the items in the above protocol. Simply have the student read aloud to you for a page or so, discuss what they are enjoying reading and suggest additional material, and then check in with them about their reading log. If they are not doing at least 20 minutes a day or reading beyond the school day, problem solve with the student about how to do this—different material? Different time of day? At school instead of home?





# Back to School Informal Reading Conferences:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## “Just right Book”

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Level: \_\_\_\_\_

### Read aloud observations:

Is it the right level?  Yes  too easy  too hard

### What strategies does the student use on a difficult word

- Re-read  Phonics/sound it out  Self correct
- Skip without self correct  Ask for help

### Phrasing:

Natural/appropriate  Choppy/word by word

### Fluency:

Slow  just right for text  too fast to make meaning

### Comprehension:

Literal: \_\_\_\_\_

Inferential: \_\_\_\_\_

### Dream Book (too hard but wants to read)

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Why they want to read it: \_\_\_\_\_

### Too Easy Book

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Too easy?

### Reading Habits:

Interests: \_\_\_\_\_

When/Where they read for pleasure: \_\_\_\_\_

### Access to books:

Home  Public library  School library  Classroom library

### Any concerns to follow up?





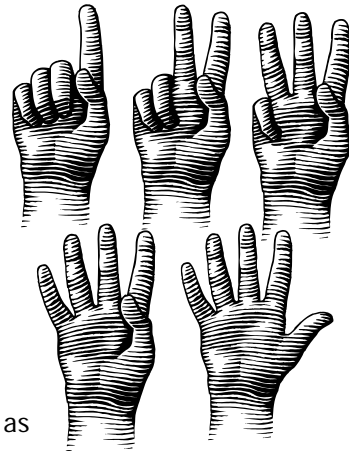
# Choosing Just Right Books

## Five Finger Test

Sometimes it is difficult to know if a book is going to be too easy or too hard by just looking at it. The Five Finger test is one way to "test" a book before you spend too much time with it and get frustrated.



- 1) First, choose the book you think you would like to read.
- 2) Find a page of text somewhere in the middle of the book. Find a page with lots of text (words) and few or no pictures.
- 3) Begin to read the page. It is best to read the page aloud or in a whisper, if possible, while doing the test so you can hear the places where you have difficulty.
- 4) Each time you come to a word you don't know, hold one finger up.
- 5) If you have all five fingers up before you get to the end of the page, wave the book "good-bye." It is probably too difficult for you right now. Try it again later in the year. If you need help finding a book, ask your teacher or librarian.
- 6) If you have no fingers up when you finish the page, then the book may be an easy read for you. Use the Goldilocks' method as you read to see if the book is too easy or "just right." Enjoy!
- 7) If you have fewer than five fingers but more than one or two fingers up when you finish reading the page, the book may be just what you need to grow as a reader. Use the Goldilocks' method as you read to see if the book is a "just right" book. Enjoy!



## Too Easy Books

- Have you read this book many times before?
- Do you understand the story very well without much effort?
- Do you know and understand almost every word?
- Can you read it smoothly and fluently without much practice or effort?





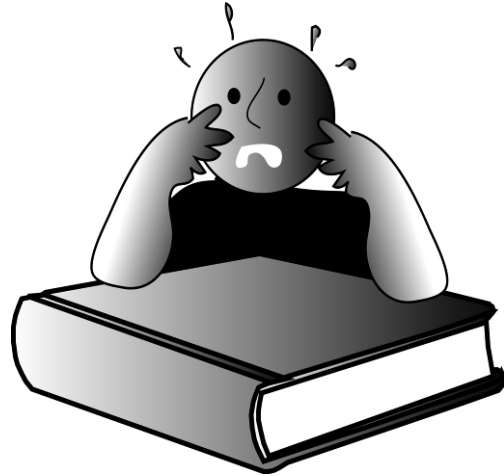
## Just Right Books

- Is this book new to you?
- Do you understand most of the book?
- Are there a few words per page that you don't know? Remember to use the five finger test.
- Can someone help you with the book if you hit a tough spot?



## Too Hard Books

- Are there more than a few words on a page that you don't know?



Remember the five finger test.

- Are you confused about what is happening in most of the book?
- When you read are you struggling and does it sound choppy?
- Is everyone busy and unable to help you if you hit a tough spot?

## Dream Books:

- I am confused about what is happening in the book.
- There are many words I don't know.
- My reading is choppy.
- I would like someone to read the book to me.

