

Just Right Checklist

Materials

- Just Right Checklist reproducible
- picture books or easy chapter books for modeling book selection
- student fiction and nonfiction picture books or easy chapter books
- scissors
- glue or tape

Grade Levels

2–3

Objective

Students will select books that they can read independently.



Big Idea

Background Information

Estimates indicate that young children can acquire and retain two or three words per day through direct, explicit, contextualized instruction. Given a 180-day school year, that comes to 360–540 words per year, a far cry from the vast number of words necessary for adequate vocabulary growth.

In addition to direct, explicit instruction of word meanings, teachers should encourage students who can read independently to read more. To accomplish this while avoiding boredom and frustration, students must be taught how to select books at their appropriate independent reading level. (If students cannot read independently, use the “Let’s Listen and Learn” lesson [pages 24–27] to develop vocabulary through extensive reading.)

Reading a book that is “just right” means that students read well enough independently to understand it. There are three components to reading at the “just right” level:

- accurate decoding of 95% of the words or better
- knowledge of at least 90% of the words
- comprehension of at least 75% of the words

Frequently, student reading selections are written above the “just right” level of at-risk readers. Therefore, students must be explicitly taught how to select appropriate books while enjoying incentives that encourage them to read.



Next, I am going to look through the book for the size of the print and the pictures. There aren't too many words, and there are a lot of pictures, so I think I can go on to the next step. I will choose three spots in the book to test—one near the beginning, one near the middle, and one near the end. Now I have to count about 20 words in the first section, or about three lines of text. I will "whisper-read" those words. I have to mark any words I don't understand, but I can skip people's names. Here I go. Now I will look away from the section and tell myself what I just read. I did pretty well! I only missed one word when I was reading, and I understood what I read.

Now I will repeat this with the other two parts of the book. None of the sections were too hard, so this book is just right. I can read it! Now I will record the information on the checklist. If I were a student like you, my teacher or a parent would sign at the bottom.

Do It With Me

Provide a variety of fiction and nonfiction picture books or easy chapter books of different levels and genres for students to examine and use as the subject of their checklist recording. It may be necessary to go through the steps several times until students are comfortable with the sequence.



Teacher Script Example I am going to give you a book from the library cart. You each will have a different book. We are going to walk through the "just right" steps together. I will read the step, and you will do what the step says to do.

On Your Own

Provide time for students to choose and survey a variety of fiction and nonfiction picture books or easy chapter books from the library cart. Give them plenty of time to use the Just Right Checklist as a guide. Tour the room to offer guidance in reading and understanding the steps for choosing a book. Once students choose a book that they feel is just right, invite them to read aloud a short excerpt to you. Discuss each student's choice and redirect if necessary.

Teacher Script Example Now it's your turn. Take some time with the books and follow the "just right" steps. Ask questions if you do not understand one or more of the steps. When you are ready and have chosen a book, bring it to me and read it aloud. We will talk about whether or not the book seems like a good fit.