

### **At what AR level should my child be reading?**

I suggest that beginning readers accumulate 20 points in picture books (at all color levels) before moving to the “chapter book” shelves in the library. There is a **big** difference in the memory and comprehension skills needed to pass the quizzes taken over a short picture book (generally 5 questions and worth 0.5 points) and those taken over a chapter book (generally 10 questions and 1.0 point or more – depending on the length and difficulty of the book).

I want students to succeed in their reading. I have found from experience that students who have truly mastered the picture books by reading most or all of the different colored levels, have accumulated 20 points, and have their average percentage correct at or above 85% can successfully make the transition to AR chapter books with little difficulty.

Those who make the jump too soon, struggle to pass the chapter book tests and deprive themselves of reading those easiest titles (with success) at a future date since the program does not allow students to retake the same test. If a student struggles to read and pass quizzes at the chapter book level, they may return to the picture book shelves upon my recommendation.

Due to the difficulty of the transition to chapter books, however, I recommended that students take a short book (generally only worth 1.0 point) at a lower reading level (orange or yellow dot) to help them make the transition initially. Once successful, they rapidly make the transition to books at the green level (3.0-4.4). They should, however, read progressively longer books as they move along each level, and should still be trying to maintain their average percentage correct at or above 85%. Ideally, a student would read a short, medium, and long chapter book at each step through the levels. Reading all the short books will not earn them the right to jump to the next AR reading color level. Also success with one book at a higher level does not automatically mean the student is ready for all books at that upper level. None of us enjoys reading at our uppermost level all the time. Rather students should read within their range.

There is no “magic number” of points that determines when a student moves from the green chapter books to the red level chapter books, or from red to dark blue books. It is more a matter of reading ability, maturity, and interest level. Many red chapter books (4.5-5.9 reading level) cover topics that are not appropriate for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, or even 4<sup>th</sup> graders – even if their reading level is within that range. Young adult books do not generally go out to students below 6<sup>th</sup> grade for this same reason. Keep in mind that the reading level and interest level of a book are not necessarily the same.

I do not set the reading levels. The test producer determines the reading level through analysis of the vocabulary, sentence structure, etc. used by the author. If the reading level is high, generally the content was geared toward older readers. This is why AR also lists an interest level for each book on their website: LG (lower grades = K - 3); MG (middle grades = 4 - 6); MG+ (middle grades+ = 6 - 8); and UG (upper grades = 9 - 12). Students reading far above their grade level can ask me for title suggestions appropriate for them and I will do my best to accommodate them.

If a student is struggling to pass their AR quizzes, the reason could be due to any of several factors. They may be reading too quickly or skipping parts of the book. Questions on the quiz are taken from all sections of the book.

The book may be too hard for them. Use the “rule of five” to help them pick a book that won’t frustrate them and that they will understand. (Have them read 2-3 pages and hold up a finger for each word they do not know. If they know all the words or all but one, they should find this book easy to read. If they don’t know 2 of the words, they may learn something while reading this book. Three fingers up are a warning that this book might be frustrating for them to read. Four or five fingers up means stop. This book is too difficult and they should wait until they are better readers before attempting it.)

They may need to read the book more than once. We all pick out things within television shows, movies, and books the second or third time we view them that we missed the first time around.

They may need to find a time and place to read that is free of other distractions. I see students who choose good books to read but don’t give themselves the opportunity to settle down undisturbed, crack open the book, and allow the book to draw them in.

Reading along with your student will also help them to understand what is being read and will allow you to have a better idea of your child’s reading level. They will also see that you value reading.

Students may take a quiz on any book at their level as long as there is an AR quiz available for it. The book may be one from our school library, from the public library, or one that you have at home. To check if there is an AR quiz for any book, visit the AR Book Finder website. Most importantly, pick a title that your student will want to read and want to finish.