



How to support your child through the Book Bands - and beyond!

Reading books are graded by difficulty by reading levels known as Book Bands. Each Book Band has its own colour. The chart below gives an indication of the range of Book Band levels at which most children will be reading as they progress through primary school. The chart shows the progress of an 'average' band of children- but no individual child is 'average', so no child makes smooth progress precisely in this way. Children tend to learn in fits and starts - periods of growth followed by periods of consolidation when their progress seems to halt for a while. The periods where you don't see rapid progress may be worrying, especially after a 'growth spurt', but they are important as your child develops confidence in using and applying their newly acquired skills. If you are ever worried about your child's progress, talk to their teacher.

It is of no benefit to 'race' through the book bands and every child is different. The information below gives you specific advice about how to support your child through each stage.

Year Group	Oxford Levels	Book Band	Approx Word Count
Reception	1+	Pink	30-40 words
	2	Red	50-60 words
	3	Yellow	80-100 words
Year 1	4	Light Blue	100-150 words
	5	Green	120-180 words
	6	Orange	250-450 words
Year 2	7	Turquoise	300-670 words
	8	Purple	550-800 words
	9	Gold	700-1000 words
	10	White	690-1400 words
	11	Lime	880-1650 words

Lilac Level

Lilac level books are wordless books that tell a story through pictures alone. They help children to develop speaking and listening skills through creating and telling stories.

How to support your child reading Lilac level books.

Your child is just beginning to discover the excitement of books. Although there are no words, these books are an important introduction to reading. Please encourage your child to:

- look at the pages in order and talk about what is happening on the left hand page before the right hand page.
- talk about what is happening on each page, rather than just what they see in the picture.
- tell you who or what the book is about.

Pink Level

Pink level is the very first level of reading books which have words. The number of words increases slightly as your child progresses through the level.

How to support your child reading Pink Level books.

Your child is beginning to learn to read. As they read, please help them to:

- read the words carefully. Ask your child to sound out and blend only the words they can't read yet, not every word. Eventually almost all words will become part of your child's 'sight memory' and they won't have to sound them out at all.
- on second and third readings of the book, encourage them to read with more pace and with less focus on sounding out the letters in the word.
- make a story out of a whole book, rather than focussing just on what is happening on each page.
- tell you something that happened in the book, or tell you about something they have found out from the book.

Red Level

Red level books have a slightly increased number of words, an increase in the number of pages and a slightly more complex story line.

The growing complexity in the story lines is reinforced through the development of inference and prediction using visual literacy.

How to support your child reading Red Level books

Your child is beginning to learn how to read. As they read, please help them to:

- read the words carefully. Ask your child to sound out and blend only the words they can't read yet, not every word. Eventually almost all words will become part of your child's 'sight memory' and they won't have to sound them out at all.
- on second and third readings of the book, encourage them to read with more pace and with less focus on sounding out the letters in the word.
- make a story out of a whole book, rather than focussing just on what is happening on each page.
- tell you something that happened in the book, or tell you about something they have found out from the book.

Yellow Level

At this level children are introduced to new characters. Non-fiction titles build on their interests and encourage discussion around pictures and photographs. New learning includes a slightly increased number of words and move away from familiar experiences.

Yellow books require some inference skills from the reader e.g. humour, and have more variation in sentence structure including sentences with more than one clause.

How to support your child reading Yellow Level books.

Your child is now beginning to read with more confidence. As they read aloud, you can help them by:

- giving them time to sound out words they don't know. If they still struggle, encourage them to try sounding out the whole word first, rather than guessing from pictures or from the first letter.
- giving them time to recognise and correct their own mistakes
- asking them to talk about what is happening in the book, encouraging them to make links to events on previous pages.

Blue Level

Blue level books have a slightly increased number of words and some variation in sentence beginnings. They may use ellipses and other punctuation. The story lines are more complex, including more than one event, and the stories are less dependent on picture cues.

How to support your child reading Blue Level books:

Your child is now developing into a more confident reader. Encourage them to select books at the library or bookshop as well as those from school. As they read, you can help by encouraging them to:

- sound out quickly - and silently - inside their heads, if they need to sound out words.
- look at the punctuation marks. You may want to model how to read a page of writing, paying attention to punctuation, such as full-stops and question marks.
- tell you about what the characters in the story are doing and why they are acting that way.

- show you how they can find particular things that interest them in non-fiction books.

Green Level

The number of words increases slightly in Green level books. Stories have a wider variety of characters and events which develop over a number of pages. Sentences may include lists of things or actions, and adverbs are used frequently to begin sentences. The books begin to use capital letters to support reading with expression.

The growing complexity in the story lines is reinforced through the development of inference and prediction using visual literacy. All of the books introduce new sets of characters which are revisited throughout the level.

How to support your child reading Green Level books

Your child is now developing into a more confident reader. Encourage them to select from books at the library or bookshop as well as those from school. As they read, you can help by encouraging them to:

- sound out quickly - and silently - inside their heads, if they need to sound out words.
- look at the punctuation marks. You may want to model how to read a page of writing, paying attention to punctuation, such as full-stops and question marks.
- tell you about what the characters in the story are doing and why they are acting that way.
- show you how they can find particular things that interest them in non-fiction books.

Orange Level

At Orange Level, the page count increases from 16 pages to 24 pages to challenge and encourage reading stamina. There is an increased use of dialogue to encourage reading with expression.

Orange Level books introduce some complex sentences (use of 'if', 'so', and 'because') and include italics to show emphasis. Slightly more literary language is used. Children are increasingly encouraged to infer meaning from the text in order to gain full enjoyment from the story.

How to support your child reading Orange level books.

Your child is now beginning to read with more independence. They should be feeling more confident and will rarely need to sound out words. You can help them by:

- listening to them when they read aloud. If they make mistakes, but they keep the sense of the text, don't interrupt. You can revisit that page at the end of the session to check for certain words.
- reminding them of useful strategies if they can't read a word. E.g. sounding the word out silently under their breath, dividing a longer word into syllables or looking at the word without an -ing, or an -ed ending.
- not allowing them to worry about a word. Tell them what it says and revisit the word once you have completed the book.
- encouraging the use of expression, especially for character speech in fiction books. You may wish to model reading some pages to your child for them to copy.
- talking about how the characters are feeling and why.

Turquoise Level

Turquoise level books include an increasing range of adjectives and more descriptive verbs to replace 'said'. There is an increased proportion of space allocated to print rather than pictures.

Turquoise level books include words chosen for appropriateness and impact rather than being easily decoded, with more extended descriptions. Paragraphs begin to develop and more unusual and challenging vocabulary is included.

How to support your child reading Turquoise Level books.

Your child is now beginning to read with more independence and their books are getting longer. You can help them by:

- encouraging them to read some pages silently, inside their heads

- listening to some pages read aloud, encouraging the use of expression and paying attention to punctuation marks.
- talking about how events in the book relate to each other and helping your child to understand how the story builds up in a longer book.
- asking them to tell you about interesting things they found out and showing you where information is in the book.

Purple Level

Purple level books include an increased proportion of longer sentences, with a more challenging vocabulary. Some Purple books have short chapters to challenge and encourage reading stamina.

Purple level books include longer and more complex sentences with the inclusion of more complex conjunctions. Story features such as plot, character and setting are developed in more detail and the text in non-fiction books is presented in a variety of ways.

How to support your child reading Purple level books.

Your child is now beginning to read with more independence and their books are getting longer. You can help them by:

- encouraging them to read some pages silently inside their heads
- listening to some pages read aloud, encouraging the use of expression and paying attention to punctuation marks.
- talking about how events in the book relate to each other and helping your child to understand how the story builds up in a longer book.
- asking them to tell you about interesting things they found out and showing where information is in the book.

Gold Level

Gold level books include more sophisticated and challenging vocabulary, including word play and the introduction of figurative language. Some Gold books have longer chapters for more sustained reading.

Children reading at this level are mainly confident independent readers who can tackle increasingly complex language, story structures and text layout.

However, even at this level the books have been carefully levelled to provide the right level of challenge.

How to support your child reading Gold level books.

Your child is now reading longer books with fewer illustrations, so they continue to need your help to ensure that they are getting the full meaning and enjoyment from a text. They may prefer to read one chapter or section at a time, rather than reading the whole book in one session. You can support them by:

- asking them to read some pages of the book aloud to you so that you can enjoy hearing them reading with expression and pace.
- asking them to find parts of the text which describe a character or place and talking about the words used in the description.
- asking for regular updates as to what is happening in the book, so that you know how the different chapters or sections link.
- talking about how much they enjoy a book, or type of book. Encourage them to look for more books of the type they enjoy or ones written by a favourite author.

White Level

In White level books there is a more sophisticated use of narrative voice. Clauses in longer sentences are separated by commas to encourage developing intonation. Some books have longer chapters for more sustained reading.

The stories included at White level encourage children to empathise with the characters and consider why they behave as they do, and how they change during the course of the story. The non-fiction books are divided into sections that require more sustained reading and there is increased challenge in the layout of the information.

How to support your child reading White level books.

Your child is now reading longer books with fewer illustrations, so they continue to need your help to ensure that they are getting the full meaning and enjoyment from the text. They may prefer to read one chapter or section at a time, rather than reading a whole book in one session. You can support them by:

- asking them to read some pages of the book aloud to you so that you can enjoy hearing them reading with expression and pace.
- asking them to find parts of the text which describe a character or place and talking about the words used in the description.
- asking for regular updates as to what is happening in the book, so that you know how the different chapters or sections link.
- talking about how much they enjoy a book, or type of book. Encourage them to look for more books of the type they enjoy or ones written by a favourite author.

Lime Level

Lime level books include a widening range of writing styles and an increased variation in sentence structure, including -ing clauses and longer sentences with more than two clauses.

Children reading at Lime level are able to interpret more sophisticated word plays and puns. The narrator's voice in a fiction story may be distinguished from the character's voice through figurative, idiomatic and literary language. The story is often told through dialogue and action to 'show' instead of 'tell' as the plot develops.

How to support your child reading Lime Level books.

Although your child is now taking off as a reader, it is still important that you read with them and talk to them about their reading. This reassures them that their reading is still important to you, as well as giving you an opportunity to share an enjoyment of books. You can still help them by:

- asking them to read aloud some parts of the text which they particularly enjoy. This may include action or description. Talk about how the writer made those parts enjoyable.

- talking about how characters develop or how they react to different people, places or events
- reading the books yourself so you can talk together about the smaller details of the book.
- ensuring that your child knows the meaning of unfamiliar words - do not assume.

Moving into 'Free Reading.'

The term free reading is misleading as at this stage your child still needs support and guidance - often more so than when they are working through the book bands.

Your input is invaluable as children move into Key Stage 2 and towards their transition to high school. Throughout their time at primary school, regardless of reading ability, children will benefit from your input. You can help them by:

- continuing to share books - reading with and to your child as well as hearing them read
- engaging your child in discussion about what they have read
- asking questions which encourage your child to go back to the book to find answers - developing skills of skimming and scanning.
- continuing to read aloud to your child at bedtime. This shows them the importance you place on reading as well as developing their vocabulary and love of story.
- discussing wider issues around books - as children get older this will include historical and geographical setting and specific vocabulary of the time.

At this stage, children need support to find a book which they will enjoy and which will enable them to develop reading stamina. Reading the first chapter of a new book to your child will help them to switch into an author's style and give them the confidence to read on independently. Sharing reading is one of the best ways of developing your child's fluency and understanding.

Do not be concerned if your child sometimes wishes to return to easier reading material, all children like to sometimes read books they have already read and those which build their confidence.

Speak to your child's teacher if you feel that your child needs further support with reading at this stage.

The 'reading passports' have been designed to support children choose appropriate books for their age.

The website - love reading for kids - has a wide range of recommendations for children.

<https://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk/>

Barrington-stoke books are shorter 'dyslexia-friendly' books which have an interest level appropriate for older children and teenagers while being printed in a clearer script on a tinted paper. There are selections of these books in the local libraries.

<https://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/>