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As a child starts school and begins learning to read, parents are likely to hear the term reading level. A teacher might share that a student is reading at, above, or below level. They may also provide specific numbers, like 440L or GR J. Parents can find all this confusing, so we've put together this simple guide for teachers to share as they discuss what reading levels mean for their students.

**What are reading levels?**Source: ScholasticReading levels are a way of determining the reading skills a student already has. They measure a child's reading comprehension and fluency, using a variety of factors like phoneme awareness, decoding, vocabulary, and more. Teachers use reading levels to understand what a student knows and what they need to work on. They might also be used to assemble kids into small reading groups. Many children's book publishers indicate reading levels on their books, so parents and kids can quickly find options to suit their needs. Choosing the right reading level can be key for many children. If the book they try to read is too difficult for them, they may give up. On the other hand, reading books that are too easy won't challenge them to build their skills.

**Suggestions, Not Rules**It's extremely important to remember a few things about these levels. First of all, in some cases, the score evaluates the ease of reading of a book, but not the content. For instance, a book like Alice Walkers The Color Purple earns a 4.0 score on the AR/ATOS scale, indicating its written at a fourth grade level. However, most people would agree that the content of this book isn't right for fourth graders. In fact, this type of book is what's known as high-low, meaning the content and interest level is meant for higher-grade students, while the readability score is low enough that less-skilled readers will find it within their range. (Learn more about high-low books here.)

**So while level numbers can be helpful, they aren't the only indicator you should use when choosing a book. In fact, many teachers caution against using levels to limit kids' reading choices. If a child is willing to tackle a more difficult book because the subject matter interests them, go ahead and let them! On the other hand, if they want to reread old favorites just for fun, that's great too. The most important thing is to get students reading, whenever and however possible.**

**How To Determine Reading Levels**Source: The Groovy Teacher on TwitterSchools give reading assessments one or more times each year. These assessments measure a student's reading level based on one of several available systems. Each system has its own formula for determining a score, and your child might even be given a score in several different reading level systems. Below are some of the most common systems you'll find in schools, districts, and libraries. Every leveled book has a different score in each system, and you can find equivalency charts online to help you compare the various scores. Note that there are many systems out there, with different companies and publishers often designing their own. These basic four will cover most schools and students, though.

**Lexile Reading Levels**Lexile is one of the most common reading level systems. These levels are indicated by a number followed by the capital letter L. They range from 10L for brand-new readers to 2000L and above for advanced readers. The first digit of the score roughly corresponds with grade level, so a book rated 370 would be appropriate for most third graders. When looking for just right books for Lexile levels, aim for those that are rated 100L below to 50L above your child's current score.

**Example Lexile measures include:**David Goes to School: 210LJudy Moody and the Bad Luck Charm: 470LThe Lightning Thief (Percy Jackson): 680LThe Hobbit: 1000LGuided Reading Levels (Fountas and Pinnell)The GRL reading level system was developed by two Ohio State University professors, Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell. You might hear it referred to by either of these names or by the abbreviation GRL. In recent years, this system has faced controversy as one of its core theories has been disproved by cognitive scientists. (Learn more about this dispute here.)

**Still, many schools and publishers continue to use the system, which grades books with letters from A (early readers) to Z+ (advanced). Choose books at the same letter level or one above to match kids with the best choices for their abilities.**Example GRL scores include:David Goes to School: GR Level GJudy Moody and the Bad Luck Charm: GR Level MThe Lightning Thief (Percy Jackson): GR Level WThe Hobbit: GR Level ZATOS/AR Reading LevelsThe Accelerated Reader level is also called the ATOS score. This system analyzes the average sentence and word length, the vocabulary grade level, and the number of words in a book. Books are scored using an X.X format, where the first number indicates the grade level (0 = kindergarten), and the second indicates the approximate month of that level. For instance, a score of 5.4 would indicate the book should be readable for a student in the fourth month of fifth grade.

**Example AR scores include:**David Goes to School: ATOS/AR 0.9Judy Moody and the Bad Luck Charm: ATOS/AR 3.1The Lightning Thief (Percy Jackson): ATOS/AR 4.7The Hobbit: ATOS/AR 6.6DRA Reading LevelsThe Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) tests various reading skills like phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. Student scores can range from A1 (for beginners) to 80 (advanced). Choose books at or slightly above a child's DRA level to challenge them just enough, but not too much to frustrate them.

**Example DRA scores include:**David Goes to School: DRA 12Judy Moody and the Bad Luck Charm: DRA 24The Lightning Thief (Percy Jackson): DRA 60The Hobbit: DRA 70

**Still have more questions about reading levels? Drop by the WeAreTeachers HELPLINE group on Facebook to chat and ask for advice.**

**Plus, check out What Is the Science of Reading? Navigating all the different ways to measure reading skills can feel overwhelming. If you're not sure what your child's reading level is, the simple Reading Levels charts below can help you match a letter or number to your child's grade. Keep reading for details about each reading-level system and how they can support your child's reading journey.**Reading Levels by Grade Level Comparisons.Guided Reading Levels (GRL)Often called Fountas & Pinnell levels in some schools. Kindergarten: AC1st Grade: CI2nd Grade: IM3rd Grade: MP4th Grade: PS5th Grade: SV6th Grade: VY7th & 8th Grade (Approximate):Some systems extend to W, X, Y, Z or beyond, but there is no universally published chart for 7th/8th in GRL. Many schools consider level Z (or Z+) as middle school to high school reading.

**9th/12th Grade:**Since GRL primarily covers K6th (or up to Z level), secondary grades may not use GRL. Some schools continue with advanced or Z+ designations, but it varies widely by district.

**Accelerated Reader (AR) Levels**Also known as ATOS reading levels. Kindergarten: 0.10.91st Grade: 1.01.92nd Grade: 2.02.93rd Grade: 3.03.94th Grade: 4.04.95th Grade: 5.05.96th Grade: 6.06.97th Grade: 7.07.98th Grade: 8.08.99th Grade: 9.09.910th Grade: 10.010.911th Grade: 11.011.912th Grade: 12.012.9

**Note:** Some students read above these listed levels, and AR tests can measure higher than 12.9 in certain cases.

**Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)**Measures reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Kindergarten: A41st Grade: 4162nd Grade: 16243rd Grade: 24384th Grade: 38405th Grade: 40506th Grade: 50607th & 8th Grade: 60809th/12th Grade: DRA charts typically stop at level 80, which generally corresponds to middle school benchmarks. Beyond 8th grade, many schools switch to other assessments or simply note that students are reading above level if they exceed DRA 80.

**Lexile Measurement Levels**A widely used tool to measure both a child's reading ability and a book's difficulty. Kindergarten: BR40L230L1st Grade: BR120L295L2nd Grade: 107L545L3rd Grade: 415L760L4th Grade: 635L950L5th Grade: 770L1080L6th Grade: 855L1165L7th Grade: ~925L1185L8th Grade: ~985L1295L9th Grade: ~1040L1390L10th Grade: ~1085L1400L11th & 12th Grade: ~1130L1440L

**Note:** BR stands for Beginning Reader. Some children may even be below BR if they're just learning. Lexile ranges for 7th/12th grade are approximations based on various national norms.

**Reading Levels Chart.**Use this chart to compare reading levels of each system. Find the Grade Level column in the middle of the chart, and check the corresponding reading levels.

**Reading Levels chart**Quick Overviews of Each SystemGuided Reading Levels (GRL) / Fountas & PinnellOften used in classrooms for small-group reading instruction. Books are labeled with letters (A, B, C, etc.) to show difficulty. Fountas & Pinnell Running Records are often used to check progress (most common in K6). Accelerated Reader (AR)Uses a computer-based test (Renaissance STAR Reading) to find a child's independent reading level. Children read within that range and take quizzes for comprehension. Levels are written as a number (e.g., 3.5 = approximately a third-grade, fifth-month reading level). AR can go beyond 12.9 for advanced readers.

**Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)**Measures reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension using specific benchmarks. Levels jump in increments (e.g., 12, 20, 24, 28, 30). Often used primarily through middle school (up to level 80).

**Lexile Measurement**A numeric scale (e.g., 770L) used to match readers with appropriately challenging books. Helps forecast how well a student will comprehend a particular text. Continues up through high school and beyond. Each of these systems has the same overall goal: to make sure students are matched with just-right books that help them grow and gain confidence in reading.

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**1. What age is Level 12 reading?Short Answer: Level 12 often refers to the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) scale around first or second grade, typically ages 67. Why It Varies: Reading assessments label levels differently, and every child learns at a unique pace. Always check which assessment your child's teacher is using. 2. What are the five levels of reading proficiency?Different organizations use slightly different categories. One common breakdown is: Emergent (beginning to grasp letters, sounds, and basic words)Early (starting to read simple sentences and build fluency)Transitional (tackling more complex texts and stronger comprehension)Fluent (comfortably reading a variety of texts with good understanding)Advanced (able to read challenging texts and think critically)Meanwhile, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) uses Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced for its reading performance levels. 3. What are the reading levels by grade?Each systemGuided Reading Levels (GRL), Accelerated Reader (AR), DRA, and Lexilemaps differently to grade levels. Below is a quick summary through 8th grade (and beyond if available): Kindergarten: GRL: ACAR: 0.10.9DRA: A4Lexile: BR40L230L1st Grade: GRL: CIAR: 1.01.9DRA: 416Lexile: BR120L295L2nd Grade: GRL: IMAR: 2.02.9DRA: 1624Lexile: 107L545L3rd Grade: GRL: MPAR: 3.03.9DRA: 2438Lexile: 415L760L4th Grade: GRL: PSAR: 4.04.9DRA: 3840Lexile: 635L950L5th Grade: GRL: SVAR: 5.05.9DRA: 4050Lexile: 770L1080L6th Grade: GRL: VYAR: 6.06.9DRA: 5060Lexile: 855L1165L7th & 8th Grade: GRL: WZ (approx.)AR: 7.08.9DRA: 6080Lexile: ~925L1295L9th/12th Grade: GRL: Typically Z or Z+ (if used at all)AR: 9.012.9+DRA: Typically 80+ (if tested)Lexile: ~1040L1440L

**These ranges are approximate and can vary by district, publisher, or assessment updates.**

**4. What reading level is Harry Potter?General Range:** The first book, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (or Sorcerer's Stone in the U.S.), measures about 880L on the Lexile scale, roughly a 4th/5th grade level. Later books: As the series progresses, the vocabulary and themes become more advanced, often placing them at a 5th/7th grade level or beyond. Important Note: If your child loves Harry Potter, don't let a reading-level mismatch discourage them. Motivation is a key part of reading success. 5. What are the major reading-level tests in the U.S.?Schools commonly use one or more of these to measure or benchmark reading: Fountas & Pinnell / Guided Reading Levels (GRL)Accelerated Reader (AR) / STAR ReadingDevelopmental Reading Assessment (DRA)Lexile Framework for Reading-Ready Diagnostic (in some districts)Benchmark Assessment Systems (BAS) or other local/state testsEach test aims to identify a student's just-right reading level for selecting books and instruction. 6. What are Lexile reading levels by grade?From Kindergarten to 12th grade, Lexile levels generally trend upward. Here's a simplified list: Kindergarten: BR40L230L1st Grade: BR120L295L2nd Grade: 107L545L3rd Grade: 415L760L4th Grade: 635L950L5th Grade: 770L1080L6th Grade: 855L1165L7th Grade: ~925L1185L8th Grade: ~985L1295L9th Grade: ~1040L1390L10th Grade: ~1085L1400L11th & 12th Grade: ~1130L1440L

**BR stands for Beginning Reader. These are not strict cutoffs but rather averages or typical ranges.**

**7. How does reading proficiency in the U.S. compare to these levels?Varies by State and District:** Different schools have different proficiency cutoffs. National Assessments: The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) checks reading at 4th, 8th, and 12th grade to see how students compare nationally. Key Takeaway: If your child's scores are below proficient, it might be time to explore more reading practice or support. 8. What if my child's reading level seems below (or above) these charts?It's Normal to See Variation: Children develop at different rates, and these charts are just guidelines. Talk to the Teacher: Ask how your child's progress is measured in class. Focus on Growth: Daily reading, engaging books, and celebrating small wins can help them improve steadily. 9. How do Fountas & Pinnell levels relate to the Guided Reading Levels (GRL)?Mostly the Same: Fountas & Pinnell developed the letter-based system now referred to as GRL. Slight Differences: Scholastic's Book Wizard may be off by a letter or so, but generally aligns well. 10. Should I worry if different tests show slightly different levels?Not Necessarily: Each assessment uses a unique formula. Look for Overall Patterns: Consistent results across multiple measures give a reliable picture. Stay in Touch: Your child's teacher can help interpret test results and offer reading strategies. Even though all these numbers and letters can seem complicated, they're just tools to help your child find just-right books. The ultimate goal is to help each reader become more confident and to foster a true love for reading. If you have more questions, contact your child's teacher or a reading specialist for guidance. Working together, you can ensure your child keeps growing and thriving as a reader!

**Reading level 10. Level 10 reader. Level 10 reading australia. Level 10 reading age.**