Guidelines for Choosing Read-Aloud Books

Infants
Infants are stimulated by sight and sound. Choose books with:

- Bright, colorful illustrations (with or without words).
- Familiar people, animals, and objects (e.g., family members, other infants, pets, toys).
- Rhythmic sounds and exciting words (e.g., Mother Goose rhymes and Dr. Seuss books).
- Short, easy-to-listen-to texts.
- A heavy-duty board or cloth construction.

Toddlers
Toddlers like books about things that spark their curiosity. Choose books with:

- Rhymes and silly nonsense words or phrases.
- Phrases that are repeated predictably.
- Engaging illustrations.
- Familiar themes (e.g., exploring feelings, learning to do things themselves, performing daily routines).
- A sturdy board or paper construction (as toddlers gain skills with handling books and turning pages).

Preschoolers
Preschoolers are an ideal audience for read-aloud activities. Young preschoolers still favor stories about children and families, while older preschoolers enjoy humor and fantasy. Many preschoolers who are pre-readers even enjoy hearing chapter books read to them. Choose books:

- That have diverse subjects.
- In poetry and nonfiction formats.
- With rich language, meaningful plots, compelling characters, and engaging illustrations.
Also consider the following questions when choosing books to read aloud with preschoolers:

- Is the book worthy of both the reader’s and listener’s time?
- Does the story sound good to the ear when read aloud?
- Will the child find the book relevant to his or her culture and life?
- Will the book spark conversation?
- Will the book inspire the child to find or listen to another book on the same topic?
  By the same author? Of the same genre?
- Is the story memorable?
- Will the child want to hear the story again?

1 Questions suggested by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory [NWREL].