



Selecting Books for Preschoolers Four and Five years

Four-and five-year-olds enjoy stories about things they know. They also like to hear things repeated and enjoy rhythm and rhyme. By now their attention span is more developed and they are able to listen to longer books. Preschoolers often memorize words to a favorite book and can "read" the story out loud. They use the pictures as clues to help them remember the words. This is their first step in learning to read. Give them lots of encouragement.

Four-year-olds have a great sense of humor and are curious about people and the world around them. They like to talk and tell "tall tales." They also love silly language, riddles, and nonsense rhymes. Sometimes they will even make up their own nonsense rhymes and exaggerated stories to test their language skills. (They are not "lying," just testing their knowledge of real and pretend.)

Five-year-olds are interested in their families, schools, and neighborhoods, and ask many questions beginning with "how" and "why." Choose books about how things are made or done and why things happen. You may want to think of five-year-olds as little scientists, always asking questions and testing things out.

Four-and five-year-olds are forming real friendships for the first time, so stories about friends are meaningful to them. Preschoolers also are beginning to have a sense of rules and justice. They are interested in stories about fairness. They also like stories in which the characters make choices and decisions and get involved in confusing situations. Preschoolers also can learn from stories and poems that portray changes in time since their sense of time is not yet developed.

It is important to remember that four-and five-year-olds want to be independent, but still are in need of warmth and security. Books about happy family relationships make them feel good. There are many quality books in libraries and stories today about single parent families, stepfamilies, working mothers, and even grandparents.

Books for Preschoolers

Preschoolers enjoy information books and story books, both realistic and fantasy. Nonfiction books about dinosaurs, insects, rocks, foreign countries, and other subjects that interest them are favorites. They also like realistic stories about their worlds of home and community. Try reading stories about real-life children and places.

The silly language and nonsense of Dr. Seuss books also are perfect for this age. Other favorite topics are first experiences (like a first visit to the dentist), family relationships, funny and wild stories, books about weather and seasons, feelings, nature, and animals.



Ask for these and other books at your local library:

- *Alphabet Under Construction*, by Denise Fleming
- *Big and Little*, by Steve Jenkins
- *Cows in the Kitchen*, by June Crebbin
- *Dinosaur Roar!* by Paul and Henrietta Stickland
- *The Eensy Weensy Spider*, by Mary Ann Hoberman
- *Fiesta!* by Ginger Foglesong Guy
- *Fox in Socks*, by Dr. Seuss
- *Jamberry*, by Bruce Degen
- *Kitten's First Full Moon*, by Kevin Henkes
- *La Gallinita Roja*, illustrations by Lucinda McQueen
- *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!* by Nancy Carlson (available in Spanish)
- *Moo Who?* by Margie Palatini
- *One Duck Stuck*, by Phyllis Root
- *Silly Sally*, by Audrey Wood
- *Tanka Tanka Skunk*, by Steve Webb
- *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really Really Angry*, by Molly Bang
- *Where's My Teddy?* by Jez Alborough
- *Wiggle*, by Doreen Cronin



How you can help

You can help by listening to four-year-olds' "tall tales" without being critical, and by reading fantasy stories such as *Where the Wild Things Are*, by Maurice Sendak, to satisfy their need for the outlandish. You also can help by making an effort to answer five-year-olds' questions. If you do not know the answer, you may say, "I do not know the answer to that, but let's find a book about it." Plan a trip to the library to find the answer!

To help preschoolers become better thinkers and problem solvers, you can choose stories in which the main character makes a decision. You also can encourage children to talk about or retell stories in their own words and tell you about decisions they have made. Remember how dramatic they can be!

Play silly word games with four- and five-year-olds to help develop their language skills. See who can make up the silliest nonsense rhymes. Tell some stories with big words.

Adapted with permission from the National Network for Child Care. From "Good times with stories and poems," by Patricia A. Johnson, Ed. D. Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension.