

Book Level, Interest Level, Points, and Student Reading Level

Book Levels Measure Text Difficulty

Book levels are a quantitative measure of the difficulty of a text—they do not relate to quality or appropriateness. The ATOS™ Readability Formula for Books determines Accelerated Reader book levels. (ATOS stands for Advantage/TASA Open Standard.)

The readability levels in ATOS are determined by full-text computer scans of all the words in a book, not just sample passages. The levels indicate the text’s difficulty and help predict which books individual readers may comprehend. ATOS does not analyze literary merit or suitability of the content.

Interest Levels Relate to Content and Appropriateness

Books are assigned an interest level based on publisher recommendations about the grade-level appropriateness of the content:

LG = lower grades (grades K–3)

MG = middle grades (grades 4–8)

MG+ = middle grades plus (grades 6 and up)

UG = upper grades (grades 9–12)

Books with the same book level can have different interest levels, for example:

Book Level	Title	Interest Level	Points
4.0	<i>The Poky Little Puppy</i>	LG	0.5
4.0	<i>Encyclopedia Brown and the Case of the Disgusting Sneakers</i>	MG	1.0
4.0	<i>Under the Blood-Red Sun</i>	MG+	8.0
4.0	<i>The Color Purple</i>	UG	9.0

In these books, the overall difficulty of the text is the same, but the sophistication of the themes and concepts is different. Clearly, book level does not equal grade level, and interest levels are needed to help students find appropriate content.

Points Relate to a Book’s Length and Difficulty

Points are assigned to each book based on its length and difficulty. For example, *The Poky Little Puppy*, which is 1,163 words long, is a half-point (0.5) book. *Encyclopedia Brown and the Case of the Disgusting Sneakers*, which is about 9,467 words long, is a 1-point book. *The Color Purple*, about 66,556 words long, is a 9-point book.

Points do not reflect a book’s literary value. For example, *Macbeth* is a 4-point book, while *Executive Orders* is a 78-point book. This does not imply that Tom Clancy’s bestseller is a better book or more worthwhile to read than Shakespeare’s play, only that at more than a thousand pages it is much longer.

Student Reading Levels Indicate What a Student Can Comprehend

Student reading levels indicate the level of text a student can read with comprehension. An individual student’s reading level is usually based on a standardized test, such as STAR Reading™, or on results from Reading Practice Quizzes.

If you use STAR Reading to determine a student’s reading level, keep in mind that the grade-equivalent (GE) score indicates the highest level at which a student can comprehend short passages on a test. This is not the same level that a student should be expected to read consistently and for long periods of time. For example, a student with a GE score of 9.5 would become bored and unmotivated if all of her practice was with 9.5-level material. However, GE scores are useful tools to estimate a student’s zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is the range of book levels that will not cause frustration or boredom.

Use all these measurements—book level, interest level, points, and reading level—to guide students to books they can read successfully. For more information about how these levels work together, please see our publication called *Getting Results With Accelerated Reader*.