

We classify our beginning reader books into 4 different color levels and alphabetize by author within each color. Our classification system is as follows:

Red: Just-getting started; beginning readers have few words, large print, and large pictures.

Blue: Words are simple; sentences are short. Words and phrases are often repeated. Illustrations continue to be predominant.

Green: Words and sentence structure become more challenging and print is smaller. Some books are divided into short chapters.

Black: Plots become slightly complex; many are divided into short chapters.

Parents and children find the system useful, and I don't believe we're doing anyone a disservice with this leveling system. We've also placed pink dots on books appropriate for our transitional readers who are ready to move on to chapter books beyond the beginning reader classification (e.g., Cam Jansen, The Bailey School Kids). Parents seem to appreciate this tool. We do not organize any of our books by commercial leveling systems (AR, Lexile, Guided Reading), but I do feel it's important for librarians to be familiar with them.

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