Reader’s Advisory
For School Library Technicians and Volunteers

Tips to Remember for a Reference Interview

A reference interview is a conversation between you and the student (or teacher) that helps you determine what sort of book they would like. For a good interview, remember:

- **Attitude**: Be approachable and friendly
- **Questions**:
  - Ask open-ended questions (see below for some suggestions).
  - Start with broad questions and then narrow it down.
  - Eliminate: Readers that have trouble telling you what they like often have no trouble telling you what they don’t like.
- **Reading Patterns**:
  - Use the books they have liked in the past as a guide.
  - Look for patterns in their reading choices. You can recommend an unfamiliar genre or style if it otherwise fits the pattern.
- **Suggest Only**:
  - Suggest books, but make it clear they are only suggestions – make them feel comfortable about saying no.
  - Avoid categorizing books as ‘bad’ or ‘good’
  - Walk the reader to the shelf – watch their face and body language as you suggest items.
- **Find a Fit**:
  - Try to give several items so that the reader can choose amongst them.
  - Aim older rather than younger (kids hate to be given a book they perceive as baby-ish)

- **Use the Tools**
  - Become familiar with the reader’s advisory books
  - Develop your own ‘best books list”
  - Know your library collection
- **Think Outside the Novel**
  - The goal is to get students reading!
  - Consider: graphic novels, comics, non-fiction, magazines, etc.

*Adapted from:*

Questions to Ask

- What type of book are you looking for?
- What are your favorite books?
- Do you have a favorite author?
- What are your favorite movies, television shows, games, magazines?
- What other stuff do you like (sports, animals, magic, science, etc.)
- What do you dislike in a book?
• How long a book?
• What sort of genre do you like?

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**Resources to Use**

- Inexpensive to purchase
- Good source for Canadian content

- Longer, more detailed book descriptions
- Better for browsing than searching

- 11,000 books included: includes both fiction and non-fiction
- Organized by subject area and literary form.
- Multi-purpose use: good for collection development as well.

- Organized by categories of fantasy, sections are organized alphabetically
- Difficult to locate an age appropriate level book quickly

- 750 books: mostly non-fiction, but includes limited fiction
- Organized into 8 major categories with entries listed by reading level (younger to older)
- Includes Tips for Adults section on reading aloud, book clubs, books & field trips, etc.

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- 600 books: nonfiction and fiction
- Organized by format or reading level, then subdivided by fiction genres or non-fiction subjects.

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- 600 books: primarily fiction, with some biography
- Organized like Great Books for Boys

- Organized by series title: each entry includes the series title, author, publication information, reading level, genre, book description, list of titles in the series
- Series are organized alphabetically – no separation of reading levels