

## What level should I start with?

For starters, let's see where The McGuffey Readers rank as far as grade level.

This is the description of a Lexile framework given on their website: "The Lexile Framework for Reading is a scientific approach to measuring reading ability and the text demand of reading materials. The Lexile Framework involves a scale for measuring both reading ability of an individual and the text complexity of materials he or she encounters. The Lexile scale is like a thermometer, except rather than measuring temperature, the Lexile Framework measures a text's complexity and a reader's skill level."

Although these specific readers are not in the Lexile database, I've chosen to use the information from someone that has analyzed them using the Lexile Analyzer. Here are the results...

Eclectic Primer: 1st grade

1st Eclectic Reader: 1st–2nd grades

2nd Eclectic Reader: 3rd–4th grades

3rd Eclectic Reader: 5th–6th grades

4th Eclectic Reader: 6th–8th grades

5th Eclectic Reader: 7th grade–college sophomore

6th Eclectic Reader: 9th grade–college senior

This means that by the time your student finishes the 6th reader, your student will be reading college senior level material. McGuffey Readers do not indicate grade level, rather, they progress in difficulty and complexity. Imagine children being homeschooled or a

one room schoolhouse where there were several different levels to teach simultaneously. Back then, all pre-college education was completed by 8th grade (excluding Kindergarten). Because of this, lessons had to be short, simple, and effective. The pace was determined by the student's ability, not age. There was no busy work or "fluff" to keep the child occupied. When one concept was mastered, the student would proceed to the next concept. The teachers were also not confined by government regulations or forced to teach to a test. LIFE was the test that they had to prepare their students for.

Eclectic Foundations utilizes these very popular readers as part of its program. Additionally, we use other textbooks that were used around the same time. The levels of these additional textbooks coincide well with The McGuffey Readers. Therefore, depending on the reader used, your student could start at the grade level considered for that reader.

To give you a better idea, here is a list of the Eclectic Foundation levels along with the reader levels.

Eclectic Foundations Level A uses Eclectic Primer: 1st grade

Eclectic Foundations Level B uses 1st Eclectic Reader: 1st–2nd grades

Eclectic Foundations Level C uses 2nd Eclectic Reader: 3rd–4th grades

Eclectic Foundations Level D uses 3rd Eclectic Reader: 5th–6th grades

Eclectic Foundations Level E uses 4th Eclectic Reader:

6th–8th grades

Eclectic Foundations Level F uses 5th Eclectic Reader:  
7th grade–college sophomore

Eclectic Foundations Level G uses 5th Eclectic Reader:  
7th grade–college sophomore

Eclectic Foundations Level H uses 6th Eclectic Reader:  
9th grade–college senior

Eclectic Foundations Level I uses 6th Eclectic Reader: 9th  
grade–college senior

If your child starts Eclectic Foundations Level A in Kindergarten, then your student could finish Level I in 8th grade. However, you could start the program as late as 6th grade and still finish the 5th reader (Level G) by 12th grade (reading at a college sophomore level).

Here are a few questions to ask when deciding which level to start with.

### **1. Does your student know letter sounds?**

Although Level A is catered more towards younger children with multisensory games, you could omit some of the games to accommodate an older student. Level A assumes that your student is unfamiliar with the alphabet and cannot read. A student that is weak in reading or has not been taught phonetically would benefit by starting at Level A. If your child knows how to read basic CVC words, then Level B would be a good starting point.

### **2. How is your student's reading comprehension?**

Level B is also a good place to start if your child has difficulty with reading comprehension. The beauty of these readers is that they are not geared towards a certain age level. In other words, the readers are in no way “babied”. The textbooks of that time did not insult the students’ intelligence by talking down to them. Instead, they taught the student with dignity and modeled high standards in each of the lessons. Since selections are very short to begin with and increase gradually in complexity and length, they make an excellent tool for building comprehension skills. Eclectic Foundations has comprehension questions for each lesson in the readers.

### **3. How much Grammar does your student know?**

Grammar is repeated each year progressing slightly in difficulty. If your student has no knowledge of grammar, but is able to read, Level B would be an excellent starting point. Don’t be intimidated by the Grammar section in level B. For younger students, the teacher is expected to give a lot of help for the grammar section in level B. Level C Grammar is simpler and the levels progress in difficulty from there. At level C, however, your student is expected to work more independently. In fact, your student could completely skip the Grammar section in level B, and be fine. The purpose of level B Grammar is to give an overview. Understanding Grammar in level B will give your student an advantage for future years. Your student may not understand everything in level B Grammar, but you may be pleasantly surprised

at how much your student can grasp. In addition to the regular Grammar lessons, levels A, B, and C have word cards derived from the McGuffey lessons. Each word is colored by the student to correlate with a part of speech. Associating a somewhat complex idea such as parts of speech with a simpler concept such as color can make learning them easier.

#### **4. How is your student's spelling?**

I also recommend starting with level B if your student is weak in spelling. Many students that are not strong spellers have not been taught to decode phonetically. Levels B and C have a strong emphasis on phonics. Formal spelling lessons are not taught until Level D, but having a strong foundation in phonics will give your student a huge advantage.

#### **5. Can your child write cursive?**

Eclectic Foundations teaches cursive as early as 1st grade. Level B begins with practicing cursive letters. Daily copy work is assigned each day after that. Cursive handwriting, while not taught in some schools, has scientifically proven to be beneficial to students... particularly those with dyslexia.

#### **6. Can your student speak and write effectively?**

Level B will begin your student in writing. Level C continues the art of writing and teaches effective speaking techniques as well. There are three things to understand

about great writers. First, great writers read high quality literature. In addition to the excellent selections in The McGuffey Readers, Eclectic Foundations has chosen some of the best poems and prose ever written. Reading great literature also helps a student increase vocabulary. It is estimated that some of the favorite authors of classic literature had working vocabularies of 24,000-30,000 words. The average American's vocabulary is estimated at about 12,000 words. It stands to reason that reading the classics will build one's vocabulary significantly. A larger vocabulary thus liberates the writer to express their ideas more vividly. Second, great writers don't skim. In a fast paced world, that's sometimes hard not to do. Eclectic Foundations critiques and analyzes all the selections. The reader is compelled to recognize new vocabulary and often view the world from the authors standpoint. Skimming often results in the reader missing some of the richest details of the selection. Skimming is impossible with comprehension questions scattered throughout the selections of the reader lessons. Third, great writers memorize. Memorization is encouraged many times throughout the program. Starting in level C, the superiority of Scripture is emphasized by memorizing a Bible verse weekly. Additionally, certain quotes, poems, and prose are memorized throughout the program.

These are some general guidelines to go by. Feel free to contact us if you have any further questions.