

# GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING KID-SAFE GRAPHIC NOVELS



(information from Brodart)

So, what does it really take for a graphic novel to be considered “Kid Safe”? We take this issue seriously as we are keenly aware of the standards you face in your library. While we know tastes and sensibilities will vary widely across the U.S. we have developed this set of guidelines as a way of helping you build a foundation for your graphic novels collection development process.

## Elementary School/Ages 7-12

- Main characters should be younger, either children or animals, or be similar to animated characters such as those in Disney or Warner Bros. Cartoons.
- Story intensity and violence should be at the level of a G-rated movie. Think “Finding Nemo” and “Bambi” - it must not be too scary.
- The writing should be aimed at the primary audience (some humor may be somewhat more sophisticated).
- The art must be clear, whether in black-and-white or in color, and the format (panel placement) should be easy to follow. Owlly by Andy Runton is an excellent example, as is *The Land of Sokmunster* by Mike Kunkel and Randy Heiser.

## Middle School/Ages 10-14

- Main characters can be older, such as preteens and teenagers.
- Some superhero titles, such as **Teen Titans Go**, are okay for this age level; violence is at a minimal level.
- At this age level, stories such as the Star Wars comics are fine; there’s some violence, but no blood and gore, and it must be necessary to the plot.
- Intensity of the story should be at the level of the Star Wars comics or the **Gundam Seed** manga, which are fairly similar to the intensity of the Harry Potter books. The scare factor should be no more intense than that in “Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.”
- Many preteens and younger teens have no problems following the Japanese manga format, reading left to right.

## High School/Ages 12-19

- Most superhero comics will be for this age level: Spider-Man, X-Men, Superman, Batman, Arana, Robin, Nightwing, etc.
- Some horror titles will be okay, along the lines of **Buffy the Vampire Slayer**, with lower levels of violence and no excess bloodshed. Think of PG-13 movies such as “Daredevil” and TV-14 series such as “Alias.”
- Emotional intensity of storylines can be stronger, such as in *Runaways*, **Usagi Yojimbo**, *Mars*, or *Persepolis*.
- Some violence can be allowed, as long as it is necessary to the plot and does not have very graphic depictions with bloodshed. *Usagi Yojimbo* is a good example, also *Ultimate Spider-Man* and *Runaways*.
- Romance is fine, but without graphic depictions of sex. Manga titles such as *Fruits Basket*, *Mars*, *Kare Kano*, and *Peach Girl* are examples of titles.
- Public libraries may be able to add books with minor/partial nudity such as that found in *Ranma ½* and some other manga titles, and with somewhat more intense drama such as that found in the *Sandman* titles by Neil Gaiman.

These are just some general guidelines; each school and community has its own standards, and librarians selecting graphic novels need to read as many reviews as they can find. Brodart’s selectors do their best to select titles for the various age groups using these guidelines, but they are selecting for an “average” elementary, middle, and high school. They try to make the school selections as kid-safe as possible, somewhat edgier books will be in the public library lists. School and public libraries should check through all the lists to find suitable titles for their collections, based on their local standards. These guidelines should be used in addition to the more general guidelines for selecting graphic novels.

[www.graphicnovels.brodart.com/selection\\_criteria.htm](http://www.graphicnovels.brodart.com/selection_criteria.htm)