

What are decodable books?



Decodable books use words that children can sound out based on their current reading skills and instruction. These books provide early and struggling readers with lots of practice reading words with specific spelling patterns. Their design helps to grow confident and independent readers.

How do I know if it is decodable?

Decodables are typically organized into sets. Each book or group of books in a set focuses on a particular letter-to-sound skill. The skill is repeated often, to give plenty of practice before introducing more difficult words and skills.

As your child works through an entire set, they will move from practicing reading simple words to more complex words, such as:

- short vowel sounds (cat, dad)
- blends - two or more consonants in a row (flag, jump)
- digraphs - two letters that make one sound (ship, path)
- silent or magic “e” (kite, mile)
- vowel teams (rain, play) etc.
- r-controlled words (for, car, her)



“I love watching my son read decodables. It doesn’t matter that the story is short and the words are simple. His eyes lit up the first time he realized he could read a whole book.”
– Ohio Parent

This allows parents, educators, and librarians to easily match books to a child’s current skills. Decodable books go along with a [structured literacy](#) approach to teaching reading.

Decodables Are...	Decodables Do Not...
✓ Science of Reading approved	✗ Teach or encourage whole word memorization with obvious pictures
✓ Focused on one new letter-sound relationship or spelling pattern at a time, along with earlier reading skills to practice	✗ Use words with many different tricky spelling patterns while claiming to be for early readers
✓ Easy to match to the structured literacy materials being taught in a student’s classroom	✗ Use non-scientific ways to label their “level” based on the number of words in the sentences, or the theme of the book, or a specific grade-level.
✓ Likely to give early readers more positive reading experiences	✗ Use the same type of sentence on every page, making it easy to guess or predict words.

Is it a decodable? Let's practice!

A child is learning the short u sound (like the word “gum”) after learning the short a and i sounds (like the words “has” and “is”).

Decodable examples	Non-decodable examples
Liz has gum. Yum!	Melanie blows a bubble.
Gum is fun!	Melanie blows a pink bubble. Melanie blows a blue bubble.

Who should use decodables?

Families and educators can use decodable books to give children practice reading the types of words that children have learned or are currently learning during their reading instruction at school or home. They help:

- In the early stages of learning to read
- Struggling readers who need extra practice or review
- Learning to read words with advanced word patterns like prefixes and suffixes
- English language learners

How do I use decodables? Here are some steps...

1. Find out what reading skills your child knows already and what they are working on this week (ask their teacher)
2. Select a decodable book that matches the skills your child has learned and needs to practice
3. Encourage your child to sound out the words instead of guessing
4. Read any words for them that have spellings patterns they haven't learned yet

Questions to ask your child's teacher

1. Which reading skills has my child already learned, and which skills are they working on right now?
For example:
 - short vowel sounds (cat, pop)
 - blends - two or more consonants in a row (flag, jump)
 - digraphs – two letters that make one sound (ship, path)
 - silent or magic “e” (kite, mile)
 - vowel teams (rain, plai) etc.
 - r-controlled words (for, car, her)
2. Do you have any recommendations for decodable books that my child can use to practice their reading at home with me?



**Find
Decodable
Books!**