

The Reading Resource



A Grown-Up's Guide to
Learning to Read

So You Think Your Child is Ready to Read...

That's **awesome!** The library and the Children's Room staff are here to support your family through every stage of your reading journey.

If you are the grown-up of an emerging reader, you likely already know how daunting the process of teaching your child to read can feel. You've probably also heard teachers, librarians, and other literacy professionals use terms like "decodable readers," "predictable text," and "diagraphs" (among many others), and you might not be sure just what they mean. You're feeling overwhelmed by the whole thing, and you're just not sure where to start. You are not alone!

To help, we've created this guide to decodable readers, which will walk you through some of the literacy buzzwords you may have heard before, provide some tips for reading success, and help you to feel empowered to guide your child as they begin to read on their own.

As you and your child set off on this journey together, remember that every reader is different, and every child will learn to read at their own pace. Remember, too, that we are happy to answer any questions you may have. We are here to help, and we are so excited to be on this journey with you!

Getting Started

The library has an **early reader** collection (sometimes referred to as an **EASY reader** collection) to make selecting books for emerging readers easy. This collection contains a wide variety of books, including **leveled readers** and **decodable books**. Some of these books are very simple, with only a few words on each page, while others are more like short, illustrated chapter books. While these books all have the EASY label, remember that they may feel quite difficult for your emerging reader.

What are Leveled Readers?

Leveled readers are books that are meant to be matched with a child's reading level with the goal of finding a book that is "just right" for that child. Leveled readers are often put out in series that increase in difficulty with levels assigned by the publisher; you may already be familiar with series such as "I Can Read!" or "Ready-to-Read." These books tend to be of high interest to emerging readers and may feature familiar characters, like Pete the Cat or Disney Princesses. Leveled readers are composed of repetitive text that helps kids develop reading fluency and feel confident in reading.

What are Decodable Books?

To make the jump from spoken to written language, children must learn the relationship between the sounds they already know and the written symbols (letters or groups of letters) that represent them.

This is referred to as **phonics-based instruction**.

Decodable books provide children a way to practice the sound/symbol relationship that they have learned. The words in a decodable book are controlled based on the phonic code and typically focus on a particular phonics skill. For example, a book may target a **digraph**, or blend of letters, such as the /**th**/ sound and purposely include many words with this spelling: "Beth said, "This fog is thick, and I can't see the path."

The majority of words in decodable books are able to be sounded out (or **decoded**) by the child reading them. The other words used are **high-frequency words** (also called **sight words**), which are commonly used words such as "the" and "said."

Importantly, decodable books do not include **predictable** or repetitive texts that may encourage guessing at words.

In our library, decodable books are marked with a **light blue sticker**.

Picking Early Readers for Your Child

Neither type of early reader is necessarily “better,” and both have their strengths and weaknesses. That said, **both** leveled readers and decodable books have a place in your child’s reading journey.

When selecting leveled readers, think about where your child is at on their reading journey and select books at the level you feel best matches their ability. Keep in mind that the levels are set by individual publishers, and one series’ level 2 might be another series’ level 3.

When selecting decodable readers, you’ll want to consider the phonics concepts your child has already learned and the concepts they need to practice. The diagram below offers a good break down of the different types of skills that decodable books work on and how they build upon each other to increase difficulty.

