



# The Road to Decode





# Welcome To The Road To Decode

The Road to Decode is part of a widespread initiative to enlist libraries to serve families of early and striving readers better through education and access to resources. We envision a world where anyone walks into a library and learns about ways to help all kids learn to read. Libraries are magical treasure chests that open up new worlds. If a child does not learn to read, there is no magic. Libraries are natural partners to help promote all aspects of literacy, including the domain of reading that requires instruction and practice; decoding. Our goal is to help librarians understand how decodable books fit in the process of learning to read and help librarians offer resources and programming that provides equitable access for learning to read.

Working with libraries to learn about and stock decodable books and offer more options to families of struggling readers can take place any time. Each October, our programming focuses on awareness of reading issues like dyslexia and approaches to reading that help all kids become skilled readers.

## Here are some ways to start working with your library:

- Ask your library to sign up as a partner at <https://teachmykidtoread.org/the-road-to-decode/the-road-to-decode/>. It's free, informative, and provides access to program materials.
- Copy pages from this manual as handouts.
- Check to see what decodable books the library already offers. If the library is willing, ask them to set up a display or consider creating a collection of decodable books.
- Recommend our Facebook group, [Let's Talk Decodable Books & Literacy Resources](#), to learn how other librarians set up collections of decodable books.
- Go to our new [store](#) and donate an early literacy decodable starter kit to your library.
- Offer to meet with other parents to share information about literacy and highlight how the library is a resource for early and striving readers.

Decodable books can be challenging for libraries to order as they do not typically go through their distributors. To make it easier for libraries to access decodable books, we work closely with the small publishers for donations and discounts. Please check with us if your library needs assistance with access.



# Decodable Books

This list includes a wide range of decodable books. We encourage you to talk to librarians, teachers, and other parents to learn more about the specific publishers and books.

Decodable books connect the phonics skills that children learn with text. Children use decodable text to practice their newly learned skills until reading becomes automatic. Most decodable books follow a scope and sequence, so children learn to read based on an approach that introduces specific skills slowly and methodically until they reach mastery. Once children become skilled readers, they no longer need decodable books. In short, decodable books are tools to help children learn to decode. They should be used as part of a rich literacy experience that encourages children to read whatever interests them.

The decodable books on this list are diverse. Some of the books are part of a specific reading program, other books follow a generic scope and sequence, and some of the books are entire curricula. There are even books intended for reading pleasure for children striving at a specific level.

## Pre-Readers & Lower Grades

**All About Reading** <https://www.allaboutlearningpress.com/all-about-reading/>

**Beginning Reading Instruction/Advanced Reading Instruction** (bundles and affiliate links to amazon may be found at <https://teach-my-kid-to-read.myshopify.com>)

**Auburn University Free Decodable Books** <http://wp.auburn.edu/rdggenie/>

**Bob's Books** <https://bobbooks.com/product-category/hand2mind-versatiles/>

**Collins Big Cat Phonics Research** <https://collins.co.uk/pages/primary-english-collins-big-cat-phonics>

**Dog on a Log Books** <https://dogonalogbooks.com/>

**Decodable Readers Australia** <https://www.decodablereadersaustralia.com.au>

**Dr. Maggie's Phonics Readers** <https://www.creativeteaching.com/products/dr-maggies-phonics-readers-variety-pack>

**EPS Phonics Plus Readers** <http://eps.schoolspecialty.com/products/literacy/phonics-word-study/eps-phonics-plus/about-the-program>

**Unlock Reading** <https://artworksbydenise.com>  
fbclid=IwAR1hf7PmdfDjbVBdzEk7EhuettFQcKpdKRIg3tYqRKHY8FCjUF\_e1963ZCI

**Whole Phonics** <https://whole-phonics.com>

**YouKan Publishing** <https://youkanpublishing.com/>

## Upper Grades

**Ed & Mel's Decodable Book Adventures** <https://edandmel.decodableadventures.com>

**High noon Fantasy Series, High Noon Moon Dog Series, High Noon Sound Out Chapter Books, High Noon Sound Out Nonfiction Series** <https://www.highnoonbooks.com/index-hnb.tpl>

**Orca Two Read Books** <http://orcatworead.com>

**Phonic Books** <https://www.phonicbooks.com/shop/> (also for lower grades)

**Simple Words Books** <https://www.simplewordsbooks.com/>

**Voyager Sopris Supercharged Readers** <https://www.voyagersopris.com/literacy/supercharged-readers/overview>

## Teens & Adults

**Saddleback TERL Phonics Book Sets** <https://www.sdlback.com/terl-phonics-decode-1-boxed-set-3-each-of-24-titles-tg/>

**Teen & Adult Phonics (TAP) Library** <http://www.focusontap.com/>

## All Ages

**All About Reading** <https://www.allaboutlearningpress.com/all-about-reading/>

**Flyleaf Decodable Literature Library** <https://flyleafpublishing.com/Decodable-Literature>

**Go Phonics Readers** <https://www.gophonics.com/phonics-readers>

**Spalding Readers** <http://eps.schoolspecialty.com/products/literacy/readers/spire-decodable-readers/about-the-program>

**95% Group Decodable Passages** <https://store.95percentgroup.com/StudentReaders.aspx>

## Graphic Novels

**Petscher/Hooker, *The Uncanny Chronicles*** [https://www.amazon.com/Kayla-Chronicles-Hooker-Patton-Petscher/dp/1732046883/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?dchild=1&keywords=ventris+learning&qid=1625011764&sr=8-2](https://www.amazon.com/Kayla-Chronicles-Hooker-Patton-Petscher/dp/1732046883/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=ventris+learning&qid=1625011764&sr=8-2)

**Krosoczka, *Lunch Lady*** <https://www.amazon.com/Lunch-Lady-Book-Paperback-Collection/dp/0922443424>

**Percy Jackson Series** [https://www.amazon.com/Jackson-Olympians-Paperback-covers-poster/dp/1484707230/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?](https://www.amazon.com/Jackson-Olympians-Paperback-covers-poster/dp/1484707230/ref=sr_1_3?)

[crid=3NV9J799Q904K&keywords=percy+jackson+books&qid=1558445164&s=books&prefix=Percy+%2Cstripbooks%2C175&sr=1-3](https://www.amazon.com/Jackson-Olympians-Paperback-covers-poster/dp/1484707230/ref=sr_1_3?crid=3NV9J799Q904K&keywords=percy+jackson+books&qid=1558445164&s=books&prefix=Percy+%2Cstripbooks%2C175&sr=1-3)

**Bell, *El Deafo*** <https://www.amazon.com/El-Deafo-Cece-Bell/dp/1419712179>

**Rex, *Fangbone Series*** [https://www.amazon.com/gp/bookseries/B077ZXJFWZ/ref=dp\\_st\\_0399255214](https://www.amazon.com/gp/bookseries/B077ZXJFWZ/ref=dp_st_0399255214)

## Books for Children with Dyslexia Characters

**Hurford, *I Have Dyslexia*** <https://www.jettpublishing.net/books> (books that explain dyslexia to kids)

**Hunt, *Fish in a Tree*** <https://www.lyndamullalyhunt.com/books/fish-in-a-tree/>

**Burton Robb, *The Alphabet War: A Story About Dyslexia*** <https://www.amazon.com/Alphabet-War-Story-about-Dyslexia/dp/0807503029>

**Tacky the Penguin Book Series** [https://www.amazon.com/gp/bookseries/B00CKCWQ3A/ref=dp\\_st\\_0618988122](https://www.amazon.com/gp/bookseries/B00CKCWQ3A/ref=dp_st_0618988122)

**Bauer, *Close to Famous*** <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0142420174?tag=randohouseinc7904-20>

**Giff, *Eleven*** <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0440238021?tag=randohouseinc7904-20>

**Winkler/Oliver, *The Soggy, Foggy Campout (Here's Hank #8)*** <https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/044848661X?tag=randohouseinc7904-20>

**Moore-Mallinos, *It's Called Dyslexia*** [https://www.amazon.com/s?k=9780764137945&tag=randohouseinc7904-20&ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=9780764137945&tag=randohouseinc7904-20&ref=nb_sb_noss)

**Betancourt, *My Name Is Brain Brian*** [https://www.amazon.com/s?k=9780590449229&tag=randohouseinc7904-20&ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=9780590449229&tag=randohouseinc7904-20&ref=nb_sb_noss)

**Palacco, *The Junkyard Wonders*** [https://www.amazon.com/Junkyard-Wonders-Patricia-Polacco/dp/0399250786/ref=sr\\_1\\_fkmr1\\_2?keywords=Palacco%2C+The+Junkyard+Wonders&qid=1558444952&s=books&sr=1-2-fkmr1](https://www.amazon.com/Junkyard-Wonders-Patricia-Polacco/dp/0399250786/ref=sr_1_fkmr1_2?keywords=Palacco%2C+The+Junkyard+Wonders&qid=1558444952&s=books&sr=1-2-fkmr1)

## Other Stories about Fitting In

**Hall, *Red: A Crayon's Story*** [https://www.amazon.com/Red-Crayons-Story-Michael-Hall/dp/0062252070/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Hall%2C+Red%3A+A+Crayon%E2%80%99s+Story&qid=1558445040&s=books&sr=1-1-catcorr](https://www.amazon.com/Red-Crayons-Story-Michael-Hall/dp/0062252070/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Hall%2C+Red%3A+A+Crayon%E2%80%99s+Story&qid=1558445040&s=books&sr=1-1-catcorr)

**Shannon, *A Bad Case of the Stripes*** [https://www.amazon.com/Bad-Case-Stripes-Scholastic-Bookshelf/dp/0439598389/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Shannon%2C+A+Bad+Case+of+the+Stripes&qid=1558445087&s=books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Bad-Case-Stripes-Scholastic-Bookshelf/dp/0439598389/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Shannon%2C+A+Bad+Case+of+the+Stripes&qid=1558445087&s=books&sr=1-1)

**Weeks, *Two Eggs, Please*** [https://www.amazon.com/Two-eggs-please-Sarah-Weeks/dp/141692714X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Weeks%2C+Two+Eggs%2C+Please&qid=1558445123&s=books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Two-eggs-please-Sarah-Weeks/dp/141692714X/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Weeks%2C+Two+Eggs%2C+Please&qid=1558445123&s=books&sr=1-1)

## Books About Dyslexia & Literacy for Adult Readers

**Shaywitz, *Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level*** <https://www.amazon.com/Overcoming-Dyslexia-Complete-Science-Based-Problems/dp/0679781595>

**McGuiness, *Why Our Children Can't Read and What We Can Do About It: A Scientific Revolution in Reading*** [https://www.amazon.com/Children-Cant-Read-What-About/dp/0684853566/ref=sr\\_1\\_fkmr1\\_2?](https://www.amazon.com/Children-Cant-Read-What-About/dp/0684853566/ref=sr_1_fkmr1_2?keywords=Diane+McGuiness+Why+Our+Children+Can%27t+Read&qid=1558444246&s=books&sr=1-2-fkmr1)

[keywords=Diane+McGuiness+Why+Our+Children+Can%27t+Read&qid=1558444246&s=books&sr=1-2-fkmr1](https://www.amazon.com/Children-Cant-Read-What-About/dp/0684853566/ref=sr_1_fkmr1_2?keywords=Diane+McGuiness+Why+Our+Children+Can%27t+Read&qid=1558444246&s=books&sr=1-2-fkmr1)

**Borkowsky, *Failing Students or Failing Schools?: A Parent's Guide to Reading Instruction and Intervention*** [https://www.amazon.com/Failing-Students-Schools-Instruction-Intervention/dp/1937615456/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Borkowsky+Failing+Schools&qid=1558445254&s=books&sr=1-1-catcorr](https://www.amazon.com/Failing-Students-Schools-Instruction-Intervention/dp/1937615456/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Borkowsky+Failing+Schools&qid=1558445254&s=books&sr=1-1-catcorr)

**Borkowsky, *"If Only I Would Have Known..." What I Wish the Pediatrician, the Preschool Teacher, and the Librarian would have told me about Literacy, Language, and Dyslexia*** <https://www.amazon.com/Only-Would-Have-Known-Pediatrician/dp/1734068833>

**Wolf, *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*** [https://www.amazon.com/Proust-Squid-Story-Science-Reading/dp/0060933844/ref=pd\\_lpo\\_sbs\\_14\\_t\\_0?\\_encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=SX59WKSMQBZMMF7Q7SF](https://www.amazon.com/Proust-Squid-Story-Science-Reading/dp/0060933844/ref=pd_lpo_sbs_14_t_0?_encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=SX59WKSMQBZMMF7Q7SF)

**Kilpatrick, *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties*** [https://www.amazon.com/Essentials-Preventing-Overcoming-Difficulties-Psychological/dp/1118845242/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Essentials+of+Assessing%2C+Preventing%2C+and+Overcoming+Reading+Difficulties&qid=1558445678&s=books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Essentials-Preventing-Overcoming-Difficulties-Psychological/dp/1118845242/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Essentials+of+Assessing%2C+Preventing%2C+and+Overcoming+Reading+Difficulties&qid=1558445678&s=books&sr=1-1)

**Seidenberg, *Language at the Speed of Sight: How We Read, Why So Many Can't, and What Can Be Done About It*** [https://www.amazon.com/Language-Speed-Sight-Read-About/dp/1541617150/ref=pd\\_lpo\\_sbs\\_14\\_t\\_2?\\_encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=SX59WKSMQBZMMF7Q7SF](https://www.amazon.com/Language-Speed-Sight-Read-About/dp/1541617150/ref=pd_lpo_sbs_14_t_2?_encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=SX59WKSMQBZMMF7Q7SF)

## Inspirational

**Ameer Baraka, *The Life I Chose*** <https://www.amazon.com/Life-Chose-Streets-Lied-Me/dp/0578155710>

*TMKTR does not endorse these publications. This list is a comprehensive resource from which parents and caregivers may choose what works best for them.*



# Dyslexia Awareness Month

For Dyslexia Awareness Month in October, Teach My Kid to Read is aiming to partner with libraries, to generate awareness of evidence-based strategies that help all kids learn to read. Our October program, The Road to Decode, highlights lesser known books called decodable readers.

## Why are we highlighting decodable books?

Many teachers and parents do not know the value of decodable books for emergent and struggling readers, and these books are frequently misunderstood and misrepresented. We hope to spread the word about decodable books—what they are, what they are not, and how to use them effectively.

## What are decodable books?

Decodable books follow a phonics-based structure for teaching letter patterns in a sequence to slowly introduce children to decoding. The sequence used is cumulative, starting with simple patterns and building to more complex patterns. Rather than looking to context or pictures to figure out words, students are encouraged to read left to right and all through the word parts. Decodable books match up to what the students have already been taught so that they can practice their skills efficiently. When a student learns to use the skills they were taught, they are less likely to develop poor reading habits such as guessing or using pictures. Once children develop good habits and have an understanding of the grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) connection, all children can develop the confidence to pick up any book they choose.

## What books are commonly used to teach reading?

What emergent readers are currently given to read in most schools are “leveled” books, organized by a gradient scale from A-Z, with A being the easiest and Z being the hardest. The levels match up approximately to gradelevel expectations. Unlike decodable books, which provide children the opportunity to practice the phonics and decoding skills they are simultaneously being taught, leveled books contain words with random spelling patterns and no structure or connection to the phonic elements the children may or may

not have been taught. The children are instead expected to learn to “read” on their own by being guided to memorize high-frequency words, looking at picture cues, or guessing based on context. While some children can and do advance using this “Guided Reading” approach, others struggle and never figure out how to decode words once the pictures and other cues are removed.

## How do you use decodable books?

Make sure children have the code knowledge before using the decodable book. The intent of the book is for the child to practice what was taught. If the decodable books are not aligned to a phonics program, just preview the books to make sure that the children know the letter patterns. Some people use the sequence in the decodables to inform which letter patterns will be taught prior to reading the books. You can mix and match decodable book series as long as the phonics elements have been taught. If you are new to decodables, you might want to stick with one series before jumping around.

Do not use the books in the same way as leveled books! Pictures should not be used to cue a word. Pictures should confirm understanding of what was read and can be used after the child reads the page. For some children, you might want to cover the picture with a sticky note until after the page was read to reduce the desire to guess. Encourage children to read through the word. They might be in the habit of guessing from the first letter and using the picture or context. Decodable books are designed to give children the confidence that they know enough to read through the whole word. Encourage children to read in syllables, not sound-by-sound. The decodables are meant for fluency as well as accuracy. Show children how to blend one sound into the next. Many struggling readers want to stick with just sounds rather than trying to blend sounds because it is safe, and some cannot remember all the sounds to read the word. Model how to blend sounds and use the books for practice. We want children to have multiple exposures to the alphabetic rules so that the letter patterns can be retained for reading and spelling. Most of the time, children do not get nearly enough practice, and the letter patterns never reach long term memory.

Make sure that the books are appropriate for the age of the students. There are some books designed for the older, struggling reader that will be a better fit than books that are meant for beginning, younger readers. Irregular words that do appear in decodables are meant to be read by analyzing the regular letter-sound correspondences and recognizing the letters that do not have an obvious corresponding sound.



It's hard to believe that anyone would oppose tools that help all kids learn to read. Just in case, the following points address criticism of decodable readers.

- 1) **Decodable books are contrived.** This argument completely shows a misunderstanding of the purpose of decodables. Yes, the stories are built around a limited number of letter patterns taught, so they cannot have the rich language of a book with uncontrolled text. But decodable books are meant to be used for a short time. They are the "training wheels" before placing children in books with code variation. It can be compared to a child first learning to play the recorder. The song "Hot Cross Buns" is used because it only has three notes. Once children can play these three notes, more notes are added on. Nobody would expect a child learning how to play an instrument to be given random notes that have never been taught. Learning to read is no different.
- 2) **There is no storyline.** Not true. Many decodable books actually have very good stories while adhering to the phonic principles taught and reviewed. The better decodable books weave in enjoyable characters and engaging content.
- 3) **They don't teach the "joy" of reading.** Not true. Success breeds joy... and confidence. For many children, it is the first time they actually feel successful. There is nothing pleasurable about reading books that benefit only the children who CAN break the alphabetic code. The children who did not figure out how to read spend much of their time pretending to read.
- 4) **Meaning and vocabulary are not the focus.** True. That's what authentic children's literature is for. Adults can read aloud to children and have rich discussions. The primary goal of decodable books is learning to read by learning to decode accurately and fluently.
- 5) **Sounds alone are not sufficient to support a struggling reader.** True. I don't think anyone who advocates for phonics would think that reading is just sounds and letters. We would all agree that meaning is the main goal of reading. But one cannot derive meaning unless one can read. Again, decodable books are misrepresented.

- 6) **Use “authentic” books to teach decoding skills.** This comment shows a true lack of understanding, and it has been used by other supporters of this approach such as Lucy Calkins, who believes that all the phonics that need to be taught can be pulled out of authentic books. There is no way a struggling reader will be able to make sense of books with mixed letter patterns without resorting to guessing, and there is no way that they would remember it through one exposure.
- 7) **Decodable readers are not “efficient.”** Is multi-tasking efficient? If we throw everything at children, will they become readers in a shorter amount of time? If we look at how reading has been taught for the last thirty years or more, leveled books have not proved to be more efficient for struggling readers.

Inaccurate, slow, labored reading is a result of never getting the basic skills right. Without a strong foundation, children will not be motivated to read. The one point that makes sense is that the “strategies children are taught to use when first learning to read greatly influence what strategies they use in later years.” This actually supports rather than refutes the use of decodable books.\*

*\*The arguments against the use of decodable books are set forth in an article appearing in the October 31, 2018 publication of The Conversation entitled, “What are ‘Decodable Readers’ and Do They Work?” Academics Misty Adoniou, Brian Cambourne, and Robyn Ewing presented their reasons for abandoning decodable books. In their words, “Surely all books are decodable. If they weren’t decodable they would be unreadable.” Our author’s work is based on a response to the points brought up in the original article.*



## About Us!

Teach My Kid to Read (TMKTR) is a new non-profit poised to create an impact! Our mission is to provide parents, caregivers, librarians or anyone interested in literacy education with the tools to help all children, including those with dyslexia, learn to read. Through advocacy and programming that builds awareness and educates, TMKTR demonstrates how more community awareness about dyslexia and best practices in literacy influence educational change.

Learn more at [www.teachmykidtoread.org](http://www.teachmykidtoread.org)



TMKTR is the first nonprofit to initiate widespread community-based literacy programming through the public and school libraries. The community-based model includes strategies to create awareness, educate, and help sectors that influence what parents and caregivers learn about literacy help all children learn to read.

Educational publishing professionals, higher education instructors, and teachers comprise TMKTR. As publishers and teachers in partnership, we are singularly focused on creating and supporting new, scalable solutions that enable all kids to read and be successful.



[www.teachmykidtoread.org](http://www.teachmykidtoread.org)