

# Loving Literacy: Learning to Read and Reading to Learn

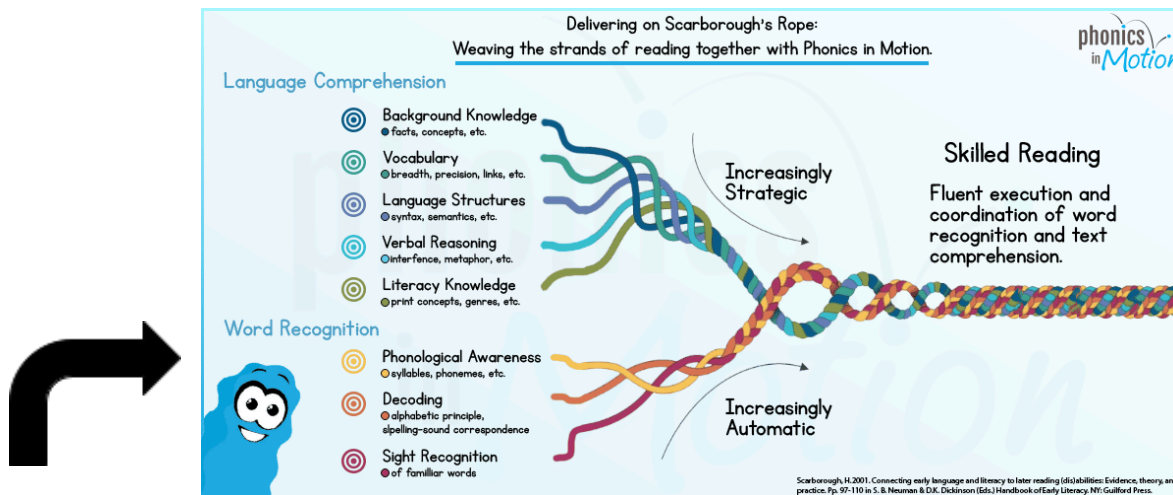
*A new column by reading specialist Larissa Juliano*

Decodable books, or books that have specific phonics patterns/sequence, can seem ‘easy’ to us and *look* simple or predictable, but they are a powerful tool in helping your child learn to read. This ‘kind of’ text is an incredibly effective and necessary literacy tool designed to reinforce the phonics patterns and sight words your child is learning and helping them practice decoding, fluency, and comprehension in a structured way.



## The WORD Recognition Strands in Scarborough's Reading Rope:

(I love this image from [www.phonicsinmotion.com](http://www.phonicsinmotion.com))



*When your child is reading a book to focus on their decoding skills (meaning, they can read most if not all of it independently) Please also focus on the following with them:*

**Touch each word as they read (at least on the first few pages)**

This helps reinforce accurate one-to-one word tracking and builds visual attention to each word—not just sliding over the text.

### Try reading some words in isolation

If the book has a repeating pattern, cover one of the words and ask your child to decode it without relying on memorization. (Memorizing isn't bad—but decoding gives their brain more practice!)

### Get lips ready for the first sound and look all the way through the word

We say in our groups: *"The letters are your clues—let your brain blend them!"* Encourage them to sound out all parts of the word, not guess based on pictures or patterns.

### Use clapping and 'swishing' hand motions to support blending

Clap once for each sound (e.g., /s/ /u/ /n/), then 'swish' hands together as they say the full word. This physical movement builds muscle memory for blending!

### Search for sight words

Have your child find and read familiar sight words in the book (a list is attached). Recognizing these quickly builds fluency.

### Count the number of words in a sentence

A quick, fun way to reinforce one-to-one tracking and sentence structure awareness.

### Point out punctuation marks

Help your child notice and begin to understand how punctuation helps with expression and meaning.

### Open to a random page and read it out of order

This ensures they're actually decoding—not just reciting from memory!

### Celebrate effort and offer choices

Praise their hard work, celebrate their progress, and always allow time for them to read other favorite

Cute image to cut out, save, or put on bookmarks!

## Supporting Your Child While Reading Decodable Books

Decodable books—books that follow a specific phonics sequence—may look simple or predictable, but they are a powerful tool in helping your child learn to read.

While your child is reading a decodable book (especially one they can mostly read on their own), please support them by focusing on the following strategies:



Touch each word as they read (at least on the first few pages)



Try reading some words in isolation



Get lips ready for the first sound and look all the way through the word



Use clapping and 'swishing' hand motions to support blending



Search for sight words



Count the number of words in a sentence



Point out punctuation marks

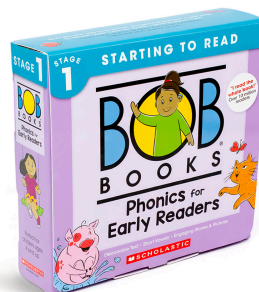
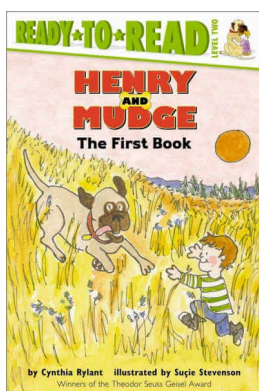
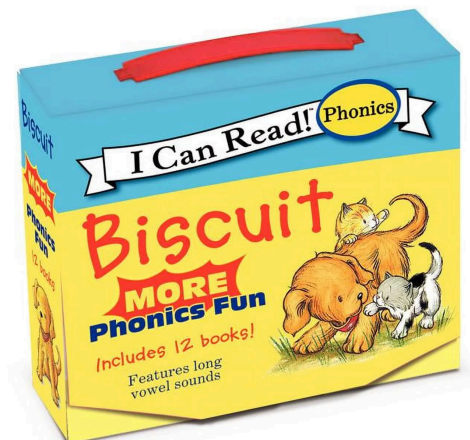
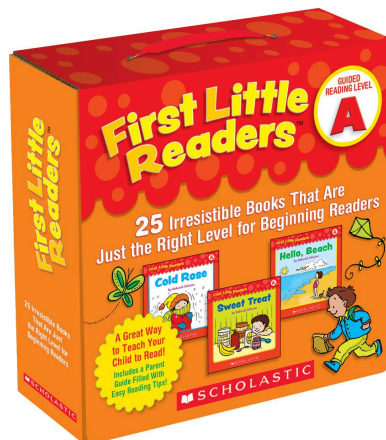
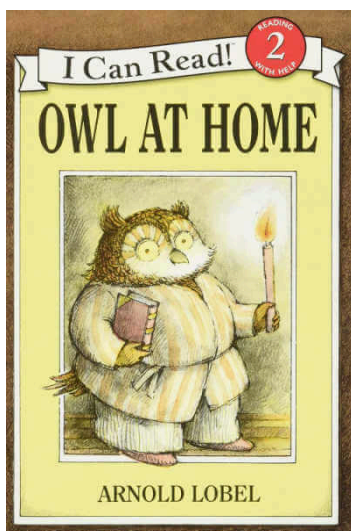
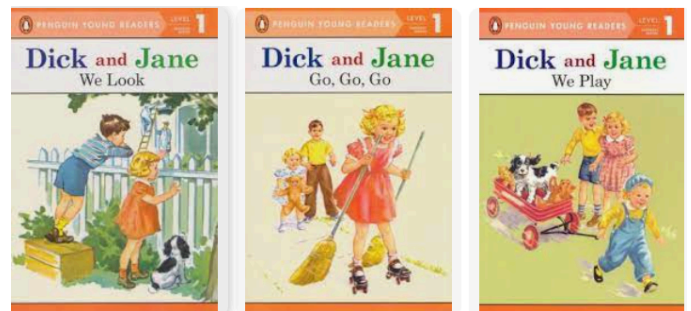
Celebrate effort and offer choices



books for fun.

Decodable books are everywhere! And there are so many different names for them:

Early Readers, beginning reading, Phonics books, Learn to Read etc...Here are a few examples that have been around for years!



Let's chat about some of the appealing features of certain decodable books - and hone in on the "I can Read" and "Ready to Read" books that we see in paperback from all over libraries, book store racks, and classrooms.

Now, let's discuss what key features you should look for when you are deciding which 'early readers' or decodable books you want to start with for your beginning reader- there are many opinions (and options!) for beginning readers, and so many experts out there have found the perfect order/recipe/format that works for their students.

**Here are some things that I look for WITHIN the book, whenever I am doing a literacy lesson with a beginning reader**

- Which phonics skills are embedded in the book? Short vowels, just one letter? Mixed vowels? Specific digraphs?
- Sight words inclusion
- Repetition?
- Engaging pictures
- Are there a lot of 'extra' words that children will need previewed before reading the text the first time through? I often approach these texts/literacy tasks with the motto: I do, We do, You do
- Lastly - are there some gorgeous connected texts (other books in the series, same characters, or a wonderfully themed and gorgeous picture book(s) that enhance their knowledge and excitement of the topic they are reading about)?

**Loving Literacy column wants to bring all of these pieces together to enhance, engage, and inspire your young readers - wherever they need growth and confidence with reading skills.**