

# The ultimate guide to decodable books

by Anna Geiger, M.Ed.



Read this blogpost on [themeasuredmom.com](https://www.themeasuredmom.com):

<https://www.themeasuredmom.com/where-to-find-decodable-books-for-short-a/>

*This post contains affiliate links.*

So ... how do you feel about decodable books?

I admit it. I avoided them for a long time.

I felt that decodable books were boring, stilted, and would kill a love of reading.

I preferred to use leveled books with beginning readers. I thought that if I taught them multiple ways to solve words, their fluency and comprehension would be better than if they learned to read using decodable text.

But I changed my tune when I studied the science of reading.

Despite what I'd learned in graduate school, I discovered that our brains *must* connect the sounds to the letters when solving words. Having kids solve words by using the picture or context clues can actually teach bad habits for later on.

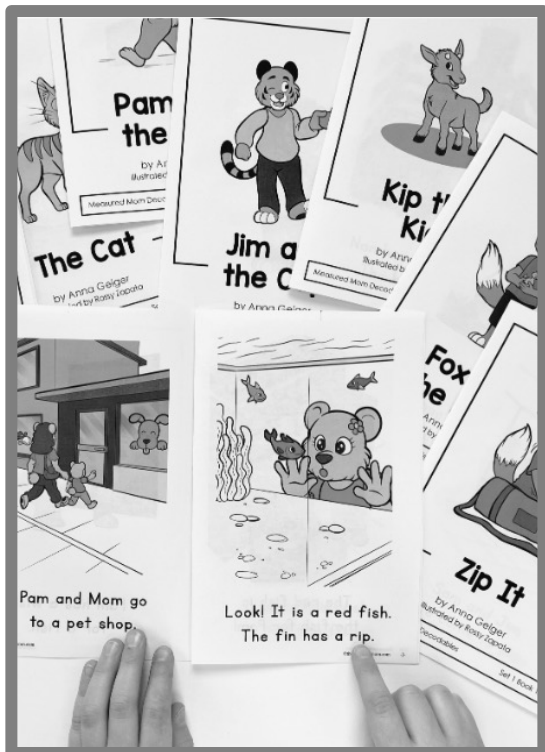
The good news is that there are some amazing decodable texts that are exactly what new readers need.

If you're looking for the best decodable readers, you're in the right place!

In this post I'll share my favorite decodable books. I'll also share some other choices that are not my favorite but are still popular with other teachers.

Finally, I'll share some free decodable readers for those on a tight budget.

## Favorite Decodable Books



### > Measured Mom Decodable Books

I'll start with my own collection of printable books, because I think you'll love these simple books for our earliest readers! I worked with a customer illustrator for a full year to complete set 1 – which follows [my phonics scope and sequence](#) and provides practice with consonants, short vowels, and simple digraphs.

You're welcome to purchase each book in color and black and white, plus accompanying resources.

Each book will come with:

- a one-page lesson plan
- a dictation worksheet
- blending lines
- the text of the full book on a single page with just one picture
- a reading comprehension activity

**Start with a FREE version of The Measured Mom decodables here:** <https://www.themeasuredmom.com/free-decodable-books/>

## › Half Pint Readers

Half-Pint Readers are fantastic for brand new readers. The books, created by a kindergarten teacher, are simple but engaging, and the books actually tell real stories with a problem and solution. The end of each book includes both simple and high level questions that build comprehension. Best of all, the books are affordable so you can easily purchase multiple copies.



### Highly, highly recommended!

**Great for:** Level A is perfect for brand new readers who are just starting to sound out words. Level B introduces blends, digraphs, and simple word endings. Level C features long vowel sounds and more blends and word endings.

**Price:** Very affordable! Consider purchasing multiple sets for reading with small groups.

**Get Half Pint Readers here:** <https://halfpintkids.com/product-category/books>

## › Pathways to Reading readers

What a great find these books are! Jenae Crowley has written beginner decodables that actually tell interesting stories, and Caitlyn Ellis has added engaging black-and-white illustrations.

In addition to the high quality stories, each book includes comprehension questions to ask before, during, and after the reading – PLUS a vocabulary lesson connected to the text.



I also love, love, love the "I Read/You Read" books (see the one poking out above). Kids read the simple decodable text on the top, and adults build background knowledge by reading the connected text below. (Update: The I Read/ You Read books are now in full color!)

As I write this, both the first and second sets are complete. I really think these sets are a must-own for anyone building up a decodable library for kids just getting started with reading.

**Great for:** Brand new readers in kindergarten and first grade

**Price:** Crazy affordable! The first set of 14 books is just \$19.99. The second set of 15 books (for first grade) is just \$22.99.

**Get Pathways to Reading books here:**

<https://pathwaystoreadinghomeschool.com/store/decodable-books-basic-level-set-of-14-books/>

## › Just Right Reader

I was delighted to get my hands on these decodables! These books feature funny stories and diverse characters within the pages of sturdy little books. I love how the author includes teaching tips in each book, as well as a page with the target phonics skill, decodable words within the book, and the featured high frequency words.

Best of all, many of the books are available as [free flipbooks online](#) so you can try them for yourself!



### Highly recommended!

**Great for:** Readers in kindergarten, first and second grade

**Price:** As I write this, the books are \$5.75 when purchased individually. This will quickly add up, but in my view these books are gems and worth every penny. Definitely [check out the e-library](#) so you can see for yourself! (And when you're putting together a wish list for new decodables, put these at the top!)

P.S. I also recommend [Just Right Reader's Take-Home decodable book packs](#). Districts are ordering packs for every student ... what a great way to eliminate the reading summer slide!

**Get Just Right decodable books here:** <https://justrightreader.com/>

## ► Read Bright

I recently received a sample of decodable books from Read Bright along with curriculum materials. I was very impressed! The books are sturdy, beautifully illustrated, and tell interesting stories even with a limited number of phonics patterns. While you can certainly purchase the decodable books alone, you can also purchase accompanying workbooks, mnemonic alphabet posters, a fluency booklet, dictation pages, and more. All of it is brightly colored and clearly based on research. Read Bright is definitely worth checking out! To learn about one district's success with ReadBright's full program, [check out this delightful video](#).



Update! ReadBright recently sent me their Set 4, which includes books that feature different syllable division patterns. What a find! I **highly** recommend this set for readers who are learning to read longer words or who struggle with them.

**Great for:** Teachers and homeschoolers who need a quality phonics program with decodable books (and, optionally, student workbooks)

**Price:** The books cost about \$5 each when purchased as part of the Level 1, 2, or 3 sets.

**Check out Read Bright here:** <https://www.readbright.com/book-1-product-category/>



## ► L.O.L. Phonics

I'm delighted to introduce this new collection of decodable books from L.O.L. Phonics. The spectacular illustrations are absolutely perfect and make it possible for the author to tell entertaining (yes, entertaining!) decodable stories. Students will love reading "real books" as they build their phonics skills. The back of each book includes word lists for practice and a comprehension guide. As I write this, just the first three books have been published. I'm excited to grow my collection as more books are added!

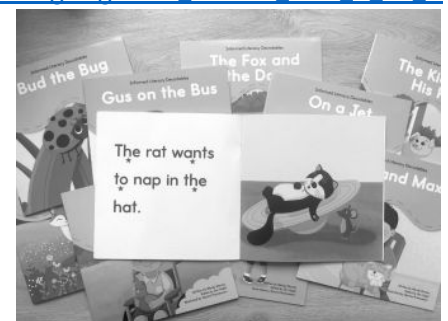
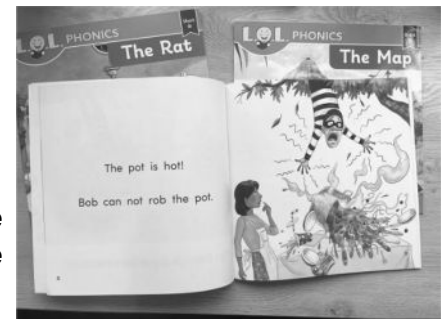
**Find L.O.L. Phonics books here:**

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0DM3R8YCG?binding=paperback&qid=1737825587&sr=8-1&linkCode=sl2&tag=themeamom0e-20&linkId=a8d69bf4fe7234eeeeab6bd7ca7ad2b3&language=en\\_US&ref\\_=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0DM3R8YCG?binding=paperback&qid=1737825587&sr=8-1&linkCode=sl2&tag=themeamom0e-20&linkId=a8d69bf4fe7234eeeeab6bd7ca7ad2b3&language=en_US&ref_=as_li_ss_tl)

## ► Informed Literacy

I love this new set of decodables from Wendy Darasz and Jen Yagrid, both reading specialists and dyslexia practitioners. Now, in addition to the wonderful resources they share on their website and on social media, they have added this collection of 10 CVC decodables.

The books feature charming, diverse illustrations and fun (and often funny) stories. The authors have included a unique feature: "star words." These words are phonetically irregular or contain patterns that have not





yet been taught. When students encounter star words, they are encouraged to attempt to sound them out and flex the vowel (if needed) to make them match a word they know. If needed, an adult can simply tell them the word. This feature makes these books especially useful for parents whose children take these books home from school; they know exactly when they may need to offer extra support.

I can't wait for future sets to be published!

**Great for:** Beginning readers and after-school reading at home

**Price:** These sturdy, full-color books are \$5 each when you buy them as part of the 10-book set.

**Get Informed Literacy Decodables here:** <https://informedliteracy.com/product/informed-literacy-decodables-set-1-cvc-fiction/>



### › Decode by Heart: Jax and Ren series

You and your beginning readers will fall in love with Jax and Ren, two irresistible characters who star in this (so far) collection of five CVC decodables. My favorite is *Jax and Ren in the Box*, when the two friends use their imaginations as they play with a cardboard box.

The books feature just enough story words so that students won't be discouraged, but also so that the stories aren't limited by CVC words. (For example, one book includes words like *eat* and *make*.)

Despite what you may have read on social media, this is perfectly acceptable, as research does not give us a preferred percentage of decodability.

The dimensions (taller, rather than square), sturdiness, and length of each book, as well as the full-color illustrations, make them feel like “real” books (because they are!). This means that they are priced higher than other decodables. While it may not be feasible to purchase a class set, this growing collection is perfect for a classroom, home, or public library.

**Get Jax and Ren books here:**

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0CLVMLYPG?binding=paperback&linkCode=sl2&tag=themeamom0e-20&linkId=8ba4b0d328b5cd1761394a2180abd97f&language=en\\_US&ref\\_=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0CLVMLYPG?binding=paperback&linkCode=sl2&tag=themeamom0e-20&linkId=8ba4b0d328b5cd1761394a2180abd97f&language=en_US&ref_=as_li_ss_tl)

### › Reading for All Learners

We used the I See Sam books (Set 1) a lot when my little guy was first starting to read words. They start very, very slowly ... gradually adding letters and sounds, and with very few words on each page.

The stories would not make sense without the (wonderful) pictures, because the text can feel rather stilted. “See Sis sit in it. See me. See me sit in it.” I can overlook the stilted language, though, because the pictures allow for wonderful discussion, and they truly are adorable.



**Great for:** Set 1 is perfect for brand new readers, but with six sets that get progressively more difficult (and 141 total books), you can go a long way with these.

**Price:** Very affordable! Go even less expensive and get the black and white editions.

**Get Reading for All Learners books here:** <https://iseesam.com/reading-for-all-learners/>

### › Whole Phonics

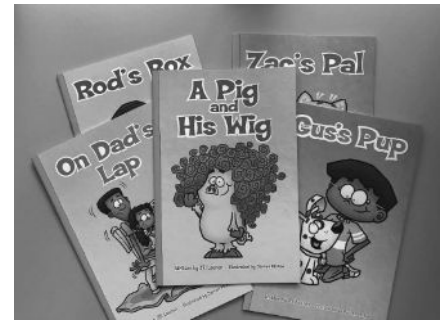
If decodable books have a bad name, Whole Phonics will redeem it. The stories are creative and funny, and the pictures are the best I've seen. My only issue is that the verb tenses often switch (a pet peeve of mine), but the stories are so good I can overlook it.

The books are on the longer side, so you may want to start with a simpler set or read a book in more than one sitting. (Update: Whole Phonics now includes a simpler set of books for beginners!)

**Great for:** Older struggling readers and kids who are past the very beginning stage (but still learning to sound out words).

**Price:** These are high quality books with a price to match (around \$5 a book). Keep in mind, though, that these are full color, well-developed stories and worth every penny.

**Get Whole Phonics books here:** <https://whole-phonics.com/products/short-vowel-decodable-book-set>



### › Flyleaf Decodable Books

These are almost the loveliest, highest quality decodable texts that we own (see below). They are also on the expensive side, but definitely worth a purchase. The books advance rather quickly, and there aren't a lot of books for each pattern, but you will love having them in your collection.

**Great for:** Kids who are advancing quickly. The books are incredible, but there are only a few for each stage.

**Price:** These are high quality books and priced accordingly, at about \$4 a book. (When you think about it, that's still a great price, but you need so *many* decodable books for beginning readers ... and the cost adds up fast.)

**Get Flyleaf books here:** <https://flyleafpublishing.com/>

### › Decodable Adventures

This is a lovely series of books with beautiful, diverse illustrations. Even the higher level books have a relatively small amount of text on the page, making these especially useful for students receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 instruction. The front of each book lists the decodable words and high frequency words. The back includes comprehension questions as well a place for students to illustrate a sentence from the book.

**Great for:** All students who are learning to read, and especially students needing a slower pace

**Price:** At about \$4 a book, these full-color decodables are reasonably priced.

**Get Decodable Adventures books here:** <https://droppinknowledge.com/decodablebooks/>



### › Geodes

I am still a big fan of Flyleaf, but when I received a sample of Geodes, Flyleaf lost its place as our most beautiful decodables. Geodes are truly lovely, incredible books. I could hardly wait to read them when I opened the box.

It's rare that you find decodable books that actually impart knowledge, but Geodes has mastered this. The books have decodable text, fantastic illustrations or photographs, AND huge opportunities for building vocabulary, comprehension, and general knowledge.

I couldn't love this line from their brochure more: "Learning to read while reading to learn."

Also, Geodes "are built on best practices of traditional decodables but without sacrificing highly engaging stories and deep rewarding knowledge of history, science and the arts."



Important to note: The books are about 80-85% decodable and occasionally include words that are not yet decodable for the reader. I think this is a very worthy sacrifice for readability and knowledge-building.

**Great for:** Building knowledge AND reading skills for kids in K-2. You'll be blown away by the incredible variety in these (mostly) nonfiction books. Each book also comes with an incredible teacher's guide with ideas and questions for building vocabulary and comprehension.

If you use Wilson Foundations, I would say that Geodes are a must-own, since they align perfectly with the scope and sequence (and even explain exactly where they fall in the sequence on back left corner of each book).

**Price:** This would be my only issue; Geodes' website doesn't list price information. We can assume their books are priced according to their quality. *That said*, if your school has the budget for building a large decodable library, GEODES IS WHERE IT'S AT. These books aren't just decodable; they're quality, authentic literature that you could even feel good about using as read-alouds.

If you're interested in purchasing Geodes for your school or district you can [visit the website](https://www.geodesbooks.com/) and take a look at the digital previews (the link is halfway down the page, but [this link](https://www.geodesbooks.com/) directs you straight there). There's a form on the digital previews page that will connect you with a rep to purchase a set.

**Learn about Geodes here:** <https://greatminds.org/english/geodes>



#### › S.P.I.R.E.

This is a wonderful series of 120 books. I love that even the simplest stories have interesting plot lines. The books slowly advance, adding new phonics skills through six levels.

The illustrations are black and white, but they are still engaging.

**Great for:** Both brand-new readers and kids moving at a faster pace

**Price:** The books are just under \$4 a book, which feels a little pricy for black-and-white readers. But the stories are high quality, so I think it's worth it.

**Learn about S.P.I.R.E. here:** <https://www.epslearning.com/products/spire-decodable-readers>

#### › The Alphabet Series

This is another high quality series that slowly adds new sound-spelling correspondences with each book. Don't let the black and white interior illustrations fool you ... these are interesting stories with funny pictures.

Absolutely one to own, and a great choice for small group lessons!

**Great for:** Both brand-new readers and kids moving at a faster pace

**Price:** The price varies, but I was able to find them for about \$3 a book (linked below).

**Get Alphabet Series books here:** <https://shop.epslearning.com/topic/decodable-readers/alphabet-series>



#### › PhonicBooks



These are a favorite of many reading teachers. For the first books, kids only need to know a handful of letter sounds. The books have a unique illustration style (photographed backgrounds with cartoons drawn on top). The early books are very, very short — making them a great choice for brand new readers.

**Best for:** All levels! The early books are ideal for brand new readers, but PhonicBooks has a variety of series, including books for struggling readers up to 14 years old!



**Price:** The Dandelion Launchers (pictured above) are sturdy, full-color books for about \$3 each.

**Get PhonicsBooks here:** <https://phonicbooks.com/shop>



### › Power Readers

Susan M. Ebberts' power readers are incredibly affordable because they are made of thin paper and are meant to be disposable. That's because the front of each book includes (quality) worksheet-type activities that students can do to prepare them for reading. Even more activities are in the back, including comprehension questions.

**Great for:** Teaching beginning readers in small reading groups (Before and after reading activities are built right into the books!)

**Price:** Since these are flimsy, write-in books, they are just over \$1.50 each.

**Get Power Readers here:** <https://www.voyagersopris.com/products/reading/power-readers/overview>

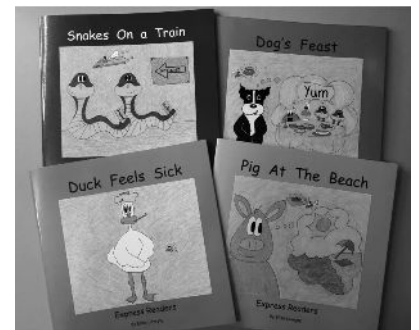
### › Express Readers

Full disclosure! I did not expect to like these books. I am not a fan of the Comic Sans font, and the illustrations are much less professional than other books I've reviewed.

But when I got my hands on them, I fell in love very quickly. These books are very sturdy with thick pages. I love that the text is nice and big, on the left side of the page. Each book has quite a few pages, and the best part is that they *tell good stories that make sense*. My little

guy certainly didn't notice that the pictures are less professional. He laughed at them and loved that he could find the little fly on each page. These are on the pricier side, but worth it.

**Get Express Readers here:** <https://expressreaders.org/decodable-books/>



### › Junior Learning decodable books

If you're looking for variety at a great price, Junior Learning books are for you. I haven't seen any other series which such a huge selection. The illustrations or photos are quality, and the books are solid and sturdy.

One thing to note that the quality of the stories varies. Some of the earliest books aren't my favorite; the stories themselves are so bizarre and contrived that it was impossible to have a good conversation

about them afterward. But don't let this be a reason to avoid the books. As kids gain more phonics knowledge, the stories become much more readable and interesting (see the book about camels above). **It's worth repeating ... you cannot beat Junior Learning's huge selection.**

**Great for:** Beginning readers and learners with advancing skills; you'll love the variety of fiction and nonfiction

**Price:** Extremely affordable, making these great for use in small groups; you can often get them for around \$2 a book. A good thing, since in the earliest sets there may be several books with such odd storylines that you won't want to use then.

**Get Junior Learning books here:**

<https://juniorlearning.com/search?type=product&q=decodable+books>



## › SyllaSense

SyllaSense is one of the new kids on the decodable books block, and it's a welcome addition! As of this writing you can get two levels of SyllaSense books. The first level focus on closed syllable words (such as CVC words and words with blends and digraphs). The second level includes words with the CVCE pattern and more.

Here's what I really appreciate about SyllaSense ... the author, Lee-Ann Lear, includes common words endings early on. So often, decodable book authors are afraid to add "ed" and other suffixes, and use stilted language (such as "he did jump") to make the books 100% decodable at this point in the reader's journey.

Decodability is important, but we shouldn't sacrifice sensibility for it. I'm so glad to see a series that doesn't!

SyllaSense books include longer words earlier than you might expect, with a variety of prefixes and suffixes even for beginning readers. I'm excited to see more from SyllaSense!

**Price:** Affordable, and easy to purchase as single books or in class sets

**Get SyllaSense books here:** <https://syllasense.com/shop/?v=5435c69ed3bc>



## › Dash Into Learning

This series definitely wins the prize for the most charming illustrations! The pictures have a vintage feel to them, which I love. (And yet, unlike many true vintage books, the pictures feature diverse characters.)

Each book begins with a blending lesson which doesn't quite align with how I would approach blending, but it's certainly a valid approach.

Parents will appreciate the how-to guide for the books, but beware of insistence that sight words must be memorized. Children benefit from analyzing the sounds of "sight words" and learning only the irregular part of the word by heart.

These are sweet, engaging stories, and it's definitely a series worth checking out. You'll love exploring the shop, as Dash into Learning also sells stickers and wooden dolls that go with their books.

**Price:** About \$6 per sturdy book

**Get Dash into Learning books here:** <https://dashintolearning.com/collections/best-homeschool-early-reading-programs>

## › Charge Into Reading

These are brand new (2022-2023) decodable readers from author Brooke Vitale. I love that each book comes with 8 pages of vowel specific literacy activities, which include decoding, spelling, and phonemic awareness work. The series follows a quality scope and sequence, but blends and digraphs are included in the short vowel set to allow for quality story-telling. Personally, I would start with a different series and add this one after you've taught blends and digraphs.

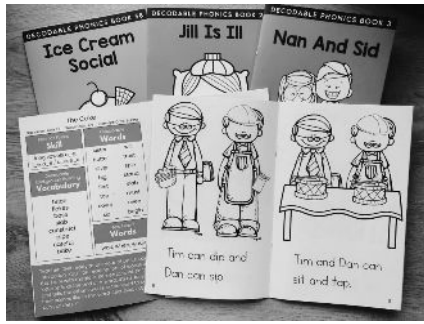
The stories can be a bit odd, with some unusual vocabulary – so you'll definitely want to preteach some vocabulary. The books are reasonably priced at \$4.00 each.

**Get Charge into Reading decodables here:**

<https://shop.chargemommybooks.com/pages/decodable-books>







## › Hello Decodables

Hello Literacy has a full set of decodable books that follow a solid scope and sequence. I love that the books come in three color-coded sets, making them easy for teachers to organize. The front of each book includes isolated word practice (love!), and the back includes review work, sentences in isolation, and comprehension questions (also love!).

Since the books use clip art instead of custom illustrations, the early books don't always tell actual stories with a problem and solution.

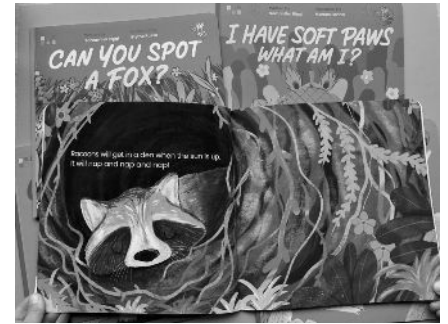
(Also, I'm not a fan of slapping clip art together instead of creating custom illustrations.) This gets better as the books go on, but the early books can feel a bit nonsensical. You can get the books in both a downloadable and print version. The physical books cost about \$3.40 each when you buy a bundle.

**Get Hello Decodables here:** <https://hellodecodables.com/>

## › The Frog Series

The Frog series is a 8-book collection of both fiction and nonfiction decodables from Heggerty, a solid company you may know from their popular phonemic awareness curriculum.

These are high quality books (which makes their pricing at just \$5 a book a pleasant surprise) that feel like real books, not decodables.



These are sweet stories with a variety of characters, but I don't recommend them for our earliest readers. The books contain quite a few words that aren't yet decodable. This doesn't have to be an issue, but we want students to have established the habit of sounding out *first*, before using picture and context for support.

I can see these being an excellent choice for advanced early readers.

**Get The Frog Series books here:** <https://shop.heggerty.org/product/decodable-books-frog-series/>



## › Pat & Pals

Pat & Pals are a series of decodable graphic novels by former teacher Sue Marasciulo. I actually found myself laughing out loud when reading some of these – they are truly clever and funny (not something that I usually say about even the best decodable books). The pictures are fun but not babyish, so I think that kids in third and fourth grade will still enjoy reading these. My only hang-up is the excessive use of the word “did” instead of the past tense verb (as in *He did wag* for example). But these books are so good I can look past it.

**Great for:** Beginning readers and struggling readers up to about third or fourth grade (and perhaps higher).

**Price:** These full-color, chapter-book length books are quite reasonably priced on Amazon.

**Get Pat & Pals books here:** [https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0C5ZKDDRS?binding=paperback&sr=1-15&linkCode=sl2&tag=themeamom0e-20&linkId=99d133d979e803dda0b86a10a597ef34&language=en\\_US&ref\\_=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0C5ZKDDRS?binding=paperback&sr=1-15&linkCode=sl2&tag=themeamom0e-20&linkId=99d133d979e803dda0b86a10a597ef34&language=en_US&ref_=as_li_ss_tl)

## › Dog on a Log

These are systematic, decodable books using an Orton–Gillingham based scope and sequence. Unlike many other books reviewed here, many Dog on a Log books are printed in a chapter book format. The books have a limited number of odd, black-and-white pictures accompanied by large text.

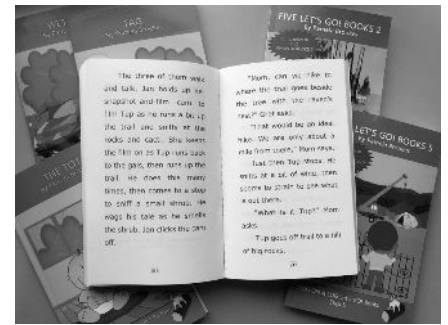
These are not my personal favorites because I don't find the stories particularly interesting (nor do I like the pictures), but I believe it's because I don't have the experience of parenting a child with dyslexia, nor have I ever struggled when learning to read. Children appreciate that these don't feel like baby books; while the chapter books have large print, they're quite fat and feel like "real" books.

I should also note that the early books have extremely helpful tips for parents in the front of the book, and they even include instructions for tapping sounds and teaching letter formation. The books include word lists and sentences for students to read as a warm-up before reading the actual story.

**Great for:** Older struggling readers, particularly those with dyslexia; excellent for parents who need materials to help struggling readers

**Price:** Very reasonable

**Get Dog on a Log books here:** <https://dogonalogbooks.com/>



### › Surprise Decodables

With their AI-generated images, these decodables are one of a kind and will have kids laughing out loud. An unusual feature is that kids often need to read two pages of text without pictures before they're rewarded with a funny (surprising!) image.

I also appreciate the before & after reading discussion questions at the book of each book as well as the related vocabulary work.



I would not use them as your only decodables because I think that reading stories with non-AI images is important. That said, these books would be an excellent supplement to what you are already using.

**Great for:** Beginning readers and especially those who need to break the habit of using the picture to figure out the words

**Price:** Reasonably priced for such sturdy little books

**Get Surprise Decodables here:** <https://www.surprisedecodables.com/category/all-products>

### › Other Decodable Books

[Jelly and Bean](#) books are from the UK and look amazing! I haven't gotten my hands on them, but I'd love to. I'm impressed by the samples on the website.

[Primary Phonics](#) are vintage decodable books that are quite popular. I actually purchased the full set and returned them after previewing them. The stories were strange and hard to follow, and because the books are almost 100% decodable, the stories are very stilted. I appear to be in the minority, however; many people love these books.

[BOB Books](#) are another popular choice, likely because they are so affordable and so easy to find. I don't care for the stilted language ("He did get it"), and the illustrations leave much to be desired. But they will do the job.

[Check out Little Learners & DSF Decodable Readers](#) from Australia. The stories themselves are set in regional Australia and look wonderful.

[Little Learners Love Literacy](#) are decodable books from Australia. I haven't used them, but they look fantastic ... such great pictures!

[Sunshine Decodable books](#) are from New Zealand and look wonderful; I've heard great things.

[Spalding](#) has a variety of decodable books that look promising.

[High Noon](#) offers decodable books that are appealing to older learners.

[Treetops Educational Interventions](#) has a large and growing set of printable decodable books that follow their OG sequence. You'll appreciate that each book lists the letters/patterns students should be familiar with as well as the high frequency words included in each book. Each book also includes comprehension questions.

Also check out [Darling Idea's printable decodable books](#) on Teachers Pay Teachers, which were created to align with the Orton-Gillingham approach.

[Reading A to Z](#) is mainly a source for leveled books, but they do have a decent decodable section.

[Simple Words](#) offers decodable chapter books.

[Ed and Mel's Decodable Adventures](#) are another option for decodable chapter books.

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