

FAQ

DECODER KIDS



What are Decodable Texts?

Decodable Texts are a type of text used in beginning reading instruction. Decodable Texts are carefully sequenced to progressively incorporate words that are consistent with the letter–sound relationships that have been taught to the new reader. Decodable Texts are used to practice and apply phonics skills. Decodable Texts are used to learn and practice the reading code—that is, to decode words in a controlled order.



How is the Scope & Sequence determined for Decoder Kids?

The scope and sequence was determined by the difficulty and usefulness of the sounds. It moves from the most basic to the more challenging. It begins with letter recognition and then introduces the short vowel sounds and the most straightforward consonants. The skills then build on each other as they become increasingly complex. The order of the skills closely aligns with the order in which skills are typically taught in Kindergarten and Grade 1 classrooms using a core reading program.



How should Decoder Kids be used? Is it a core program? Can it be used with core phonics programs?

Decoder Kids is a supplemental solution for teaching phonics. It can be used alongside a core literacy program for reinforcement and to provide extra practice. It can be used to target teach or reteach letters and sounds. It allows teachers to cover Science and Social Studies content standards and topics in the Nonfiction books and to cover a variety of genres in the Fiction books. It is perfect to use in Summer School settings. **Decoder Kids** can be purchased in grade-level kits in 6-pack or 24-pack configurations, with an accompanying Teacher Guide that includes individual Lesson Plans and additional materials. The individual titles are not sold separately and cannot be used independently.

? What do best practices recommend as an appropriate decodability percentage?

65% or higher; this means that students should be able to decode at least 65% of the words in a Decodable Text. All of the **Decoder Kids** books contain at least 65% or more decodable words. This percentage is found on the lower left corner of each book's back cover and on each book's Lesson Plan in the Teacher Guide.

? What are high-frequency words?

High-frequency words are, quite simply, those words that occur most frequently in written material, for example, *and*, *the*, *as*, and *it*. They are often words that have little meaning on their own but contribute a great deal to the meaning of a sentence. High-frequency words are introduced in each of the **Decoder Kids** books in a systematic fashion. The list of high-frequency words in **Decoder Kids** come from the *Fry Sight Words List* and the *American Heritage Word Frequency Book*. The high-frequency words found in **Decoder Kids** are listed on the lower left corner of each book's back cover and on each book's Lesson Plan in the Teacher Guide.

? How is the number of lines and words on a page determined (if not by levels as in Leveled Readers)?

The number of lines and words on a page is driven by providing students with a reasonable text load for that point in the school year. The amount of text is enough to provide many words that use the target skill as well as tell an engaging story or describe the topic sufficiently. The texts become longer as the year progresses and students are able to handle a greater amount of text. The texts are concise enough to be manageable for students and teachers to work through, leaving time for rereading, studying the phonics skill, and additional scrutiny of the text with different focuses, such as comprehension and fluency.

? Is the instruction for Decoder Kids systematic?

Yes, the instruction for **Decoder Kids** is systematic—that means it teaches a defined Scope & Sequence that progressively introduces letters and sounds each week.

? How would you describe the instruction in the Lesson Plans?

The instruction is clear, concise, and structured in a ready-to-use format for teachers to easily apply in their classroom with the whole class or small groups. The instruction includes a Pacing Plan and step-by-step Lesson Plans to make it easier for teachers with varying amounts of experience to use effectively. The book information at the start of each plan gives an at-a-glance look at the book and the lesson. The phonemic awareness routines are a quick, engaging way to practice this critical concept. The phonics section details how to explain the skill in

student-friendly terms, providing specific words and examples. The scripted text supports the teacher’s phonics understanding. The High-Frequency Words section teaches these often-used words using a consistent, research-based routine. The Comprehension and Fluency section guides the teacher to read the text multiple times with students. The Word Study or Story Structure section can be used to extend the learning, incorporating other key skills that strengthen decoding or comprehension skills. The Assess Progress section provides teachers with the answers to the assessment components of the program.

Why is it important to include the routines, activities, and cards in the Teacher Guide for this kind of product?

These pieces all support the explicit instruction of the phonics skills in the Lesson Plans. The instructional routines are integral to the introduction of the phonics skill since a routine is referenced directly in each Lesson Plan. The reteaching routines offer teachers a different approach to the same skill when students are struggling. The games and extension activities are important for continuing phonics instruction throughout the day, getting students to work with the skills they have been learning in different ways and with different words. The cards are a useful resource that minimize the preparation time for implementing the routines and activities in the classroom.

Using Decoder Kids and AlphaKids GO! Together

Can Decodable Texts and Leveled Readers be used together?

Most experts suggest a varied text diet. And, Decodable Texts are ultimately a stepping stone. Students should eventually be able to use the decoding strategies they learned using Decodable Texts when they read a Leveled Reader.

Fluent Reading, according to Scarborough’s Reading Rope (2001), is the coordination of Word Recognition (Decoding, Phonological Awareness, and Sight Recognition) and Language Comprehension (Background Knowledge, Vocabulary, Language Structures, Verbal Reasoning, and Literacy Knowledge). The Word Recognition skills become automatic and using the Language Comprehension skills becomes more strategic as the strands weave together. Decodable Texts and Leveled Readers together can support the development of Word Recognition and Language Comprehension skills.

How can Decoder Kids and AlphaKids GO! work together when a teacher, school, or district is using a Science of Reading framework?

The phonics skills in **Decoder Kids** and **AlphaKids GO!** can be lined up using the **Decoder Kids** Scope & Sequence found in each Teacher Guide and the **AlphaKids GO!** Phonics Skills Matrix found in each Teacher Guide. For example, the

Decoder Kids books can be used at each Guided Reading Level of **AlphaKids GO!** to provide systematic instruction of the phonics skills. Alternatively, the **AlphaKids GO!** books can be added onto the **Decoder Kids** phonics instruction.



? What are Leveled Readers?

Leveled Readers contain high-frequency words, predictable sentence structures, and pictures that emphasize meaning. These texts are rated on a difficulty scale. Teachers aim to match students with books at their level, using Guided Reading Levels (GRLs) and/or Lexile® measures. Leveled Reader books do not just contain decodable words.

? What is AlphaKids GO!?

AlphaKids GO! is a Grades K–2 supplemental guided reading program (GRLs A–M) that integrates the teaching of Foundational Skills (although it is not systematic phonics) and Reading Comprehension. Guided Reading prompts and in-depth discussions about each Fiction or Nonfiction text require students to use text evidence, while the vocabulary instruction builds students' vocabularies, essential to comprehension. In addition, each Lesson Plan contains Social-Emotional Learning strategies that align to the CASEL Framework, and the Teacher Strategy Handbook includes Fluency support. With 258 titles—available in three grade-level kits—many Fiction & Nonfiction titles aligned to key Science and Social Studies topics are available to choose from at each Guided Reading Level.

? Does the AlphaKids GO! instruction contain strategies for supporting English Language Learners?

Yes, the individual Lesson Plans for **AlphaKids GO!** each contain Phonics and Vocabulary strategies that support English Language Learners and provide teachers with specific challenges these students may face with each book.

? Can AlphaKids GO! be used to teach phonics?

Each of the individual Lesson Plans for the 258 **AlphaKids GO!** titles contain phonics instruction. Although the instruction is not systematic, meaning that the phonics skills are not introduced in order from the basic to the more complex, the phonics skills are taught in context using examples from the text. All of the appropriate sounds for each grade, K–2, are covered in each of the three grade-level sets.

AlphaKids GO! titles can be used for phonics practice. **AlphaKids GO!** titles can also be used as the next step—following learning the language code and decoding skills in **Decoder Kids**.