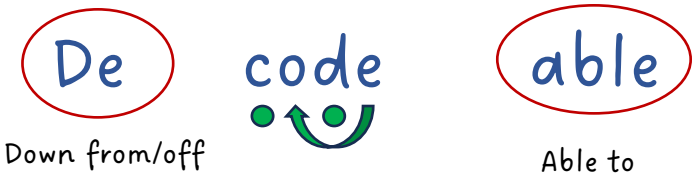
What are decodable texts and how do I use them?



Let us start by looking at how we break down this word to understand it:



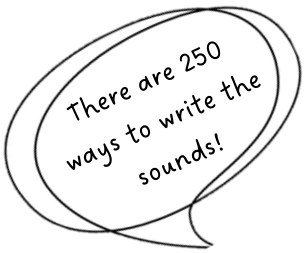
Decodable means to be **able** to **break down** the **code**

To do this we need to:

- Recognise the **sounds** the letters represent, like /k/ and /d/ - this is the **code**
- Recognise the **spelling patterns**, like '**the final silent e tells us to say the name of the vowel**'
- Recognise the chunks (**morphemes**) of meaning, at the beginning, middle, and end
- Understand the **meaning** behind these units and words

So... what is the code?

We use the **alphabet** as our code. We have 26 different letters. But it doesn't stop there... there are 44 Australian speech sounds that we need to be able to spell using the code! This means our code gets more complex. Some are one letter, like **p**. Some are two, like **sh.** Some are three, like **igh,** and some are four, like **eigh.** They all represent, or code, one speech sound. Did you know...



- "ai" can also be spelled ay, a_e, a, or eigh.
- "v" can only be spelled with a v
- 'c' can be code for either /k/ or /s/

250 things to learn?!

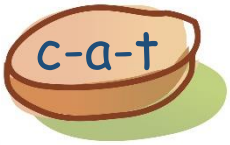
That is a lot! So, we need to make it achievable. We do this by teaching a few things at a time, and practising everything over and over again. We use a **scope and sequence** to structure what we teach and when. It tells us the order of letters and sounds to work on (the sequence). It also reminds us what the child knows at that point in time. We never ask them to read something they haven't been taught (the scope).

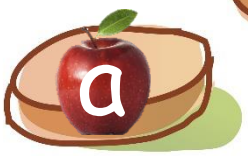
This is a lot of work, and it is hard!

We want our learners to read and spell easily. But they can't do it straight away. We teach them step by step, and they need to practise each step as they go.









Each step is very important.

It might take a learner a while to master that step. But steps must not be skipped!

Reading at the right level for the learner is very important for success.

Note: for most learners, we don't need to teach them **everything**. Along the way "self-teaching" kicks in, and they can learn to recognise patterns themselves.

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By reading text that practises the code being learnt, children can become more and more fluent.

This means that they start to recognise words without needing to think about every letter and sound. The words start to be recognised automatically (this process is called **orthographic mapping**). Once we have mapped a word into our memory, it is impossible to see it and ***not*** read it!

This takes time and practise. Reading the right books for the learner is **very** important.

Irregular words

Not all words follow the code in a way we recognise. They might not follow patterns we know. Or they might be words that follow code that hasn't been learnt yet.

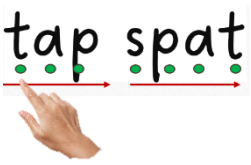
One is an important word, but the letters don't map to the sounds we hear.

Because is an important word, but it has some complex code.

No is an important word and each sound maps to a letter, but the learner may not know how to read and spell the long 'o' sound yet.

These are often called **sight words** in schools. We want to be able to read them "on sight", or automatically. They are the words we need to know, to read sentences and stories.
Decodable texts introduce these words with unusual spellings in a structured way. This gives the learner the best chance of learning and reading them without struggle.

How can I help?



- ✓ Always help your learner to sound out the word, from left to right:
- ✓ Never ask your learner to look at the picture to help them guess.
- ✓ Practise every day. Little and often is more helpful for learning than doing lots in one go.
- ✓ Praise every effort! Praise sends happy signals in the brain, and these happy signals help new memories to stick. So, praise helps learning. It also helps a lot with confidence and self-esteem.
- ✓ Remember that the brain can only do so much at once. This is called the **cognitive load**. If sounding out is hard, the learner might not remember what they have just read. And that's ok! It will get easier.
- ✓ If reading is becoming more fluent, the learner may be ready to talk about what they have just read. Talk about words they might not know, and what they mean. Help to them to **understand** what they are reading. Ask them to read the text again: can they read it with more feeling?
- ✓ If you find a word that your learner doesn't know, step in and help them with that word.

What about other types of books?

Picture books and **chapter books** (also known as **authentic texts**) are still **really important**:

- They use rich language and vocabulary
- They develop our ability to understand and tell stories
- They develop a love of reading
- They support connection, bonding, and shared attention

But these are for **you** to read to your learner. They are not designed to **teach** children to read.

Levelled readers and many **phonics books** should be treated as authentic texts: if they are of interest, read them to your learner. Until they have learnt the code, please don't ask them to read them themselves.

Audio books are highly recommended! Download the **Libraries Tasmania** apps for free audio books.