

READ THIS FIRST!

WHY

The Decodable Book Guide is to help educators use decodable books effectively and to the fullest as far as applying practice to instruction.

Research is not complete and may not ever be completely objective when it comes to decodable books considering the numerous factors, such as the accompanying program, the scope and sequence, the text and formatting styles, the interest level of the book for the readers, and so on.

Nevertheless, we do know that practice and review are needed to create permanence and automaticity in skills, and we know that the skills used in practice will cement the skills used in uncontrolled situations. On a more subjective level, we also know that confidence through gained success helps students

At the very least, if we know students need to learn the code to be strong readers, then it needs to be connected to the practice and application:

“Phonics instruction disconnected from the texts that children read contributes little to children’s use of phonics strategies in recognizing words.” Juel and Roper/Schneider (1985)

HOW

BASIC LAYOUT:

The basic layout for each book is explained in detail at the beginning of this guide in the “Basics Layout Instructions.” On this page, each section is explained with a quick summary and the time needed for each section. Further information and instructions for activities is given in the separate explanation pages for each section.

NOTE: The **I Am Ready Book Set** basic layouts are slightly shorter than the basic layout for Steps 1-6. The students in this set are often younger, and the skills being practiced are simpler.

SPECIFIC BOOKS:

Books are organized by Step. The layout for each book is followed by accompanying activities, unless the activities are used for multiple books, in which case, they can be found in the “Activities” section of this guide.

Educators are encouraged to look carefully at the first section of each basic layout, titled “Sound Spelling Skills Focus” to ensure that all sound-spellings have been taught or are needed for practice.

ESSENTIAL VS. OPTIONAL:

The activities laid out for the decodable books are shown in the order of occurrence within a lesson, not as a menu.

Most of the sections are essential, but some are optional based on student need, such as hands-on activity and fluency practice. Although, it is recommended that a moderate amount of the activities should be implemented during the first Steps of Express Readers to ensure all students are proficient.

Examples:

- If a student is struggling with the specific sound-spelling or phonics structure, teachers can do a supporting hands-on activity before reading the decodable.
- If a student is struggling to read with fluency, tone, or expression, utilize the blending lines or pyramids to frontload the decoding and allow for further automaticity during the book read.

TIME:

Time ranges are given in the “Basic Guide Layout Instructions.” Times are recommended, but educators do need to base the time spent per section and the activities chosen on the review or instruction needs of the students.

Time can also be split between multiple instructional times, especially since schedules may not allow for 20-30 minutes. By rereading the book up to 3 times, students can complete an activity or practice a skill with or following each reread, such as completing the writing activity on the second read thru of the book.

ACTIVITIES:

Activities recommended or required for each book directly follow the basic layout for that specific book or can be found in the “Activities” section at the end of this guide.

Skills-Based Instruction/Reading Group

Book	Title	Step (The stage for specific book)
Sound-Spellings Skills Focus	FOR REFERENCE These are the structures contained in the book that are being practiced and applied in the text. In order for a reading group to be skills-based, this content must match what has been taught and/or what needs review. If a skill has not been taught, expose students before reading begins.	
Hands-On Activity	PRE-READING/OPTIONAL Further support or practice with the explicitly learned phonics that will be used in the decodable book 2-5 minutes	
Slow Down Sounds	PRE-READING/DURING READING Identify/Point out or support during reading 1-3 minutes	
Phonemic Awareness	PRE-READING Auditory blending to help with blending and fluency during reading 1 minute	
Sticky Words		Vocabulary
PRE-READING Map sight words. Noting irregular spellings or unlearned sound-spellings can be done by highlighting, hearting, circling, splatting, etc. The way of noting is not as important as the identifying itself. 1-3 minutes		PRE-READING/DURING READING Words to be identified and discussed before reading or when students arrive at the word. They could have a complex meaning, a new meaning, or shades of meaning. 1-5 minutes
Fluency Practice	PRE-READING/OPTIONAL Quick activity to scaffold fluency and accuracy to support reading comprehension during reading 5-7 minutes	
Comprehension & Connections	DURING READING Questions to be asked along the way, whether it be every page or after a specific event. These questions guide accurate recall and give time for immediate feedback and prompting in comprehension of the text being read.	
Reading Practice	AFTER MAIN READING Students read out loud 1-2 times after initial reading, hearing their own voice, in various ways, to increase fluency and accuracy, as well as to cement learned sound-spellings and sight words. 5-10 minutes	
Writing Practice	AFTER READING An activity requiring physical writing using the phonics structures and/or the sticky words from the book. This may include higher-level thinking about a book or simple, continued practice of the sound-spellings. 5-7 minutes	
Comprehension Activities	AFTER READING (Independently completed) An activity that requires recall, referencing, evaluation, or other in-depth reading comprehension strategies for development 5-10 minutes	

**Sound-Spellings
Skills Focus**

FOR REFERENCE

-helps with identifying books that match the skills of the student reading.

When deciding on specific books to match to the skill sets of students, students should know or have learned the sounds stated in this box.

HOWEVER, if there are 1-2 sounds that students have not seen yet, expose students to those sound-spellings prior to reading and support during the reading. If the decodable book is a reproducible paper copy, students can physically highlight that sound spelling to further support during reading.

In the I Am Ready Book Sets and the Step 1 Book Sets, specific consonants and short vowel uses are noted, but the steps following include these individual sound spellings, so they are no longer noted. The Steps build, so each Step includes the sound spellings from the previous Step.

I Am Ready	• basic consonants, short vowels
Step 1	• basic consonants, short vowels
Step 2	• blends: beginning blends, ending blends, double-letter blends • short vowels <i>specific books: multisyllabic words</i>
Step 3	• digraphs: ch, sh, th, -tch, ng, nk • short vowels <i>specific books: multisyllabic words</i>
Step 4	• long vowels: Vce, a_e, i_e, o_e, u_e, ue • multisyllabic words <i>specific books: soft c, soft g</i>
Step 5	• long vowels: vowel teams, ee, ea, ai, oa, ui • multisyllabic words
Step 6	• Higher-level phonics structures • multisyllabic words

The hands-on activity is optional and based on if student-need. This activity is chosen for further support or practice with the explicitly learned phonics that will be used in the decodable book. This can also be used as a review to help fluency and accuracy while reading.

Guidance is given for a fitting hands-on activity for each book, but activities can be exchanged for one of the following, based on teachers' assessments of student-need, such as repeated practice for short vowel sounds, specific consonant support, quicker automaticity for learned sound-spellings, etc.

Hands-On Phonics Activities:

Couple Card Match • Couple Cards are cards that have pairs of cards, a picture card, and the matching word. The word cards are those that match the phonics structures being learned/reviewed. • Students read the word cards first and then find the matching picture. • Ensure that the word cards are read first, possibly even all read before the activity even begins. • Students match all the pairs to complete the activity.	Sort By Vowel Sound • Use a collection of picture cards containing pictures of words with vowel sounds in the medial position and a space for each vowel sound being reviewed. • Students pick a card, say the word out loud, and place the picture card next to the matching letter(s) that spells that vowel sound. • The activity is complete once all picture cards have been matched to their vowel sound. NOTE: This can also be used with initial sounds or final sounds.
Hop Words • Teachers lay out letter cards, including sound-spellings for vowel sounds. • Students must build a word by hopping on the individual spellings and saying that spelling out loud. • The activity can be merely hopping, saying sounds, and blending to make a word, or the activity can include writing the word down as a record of all the words that have been built.	Sound Strings • Students have a letter manipulative (magnetic letters on a magnetic board, letter cards, letter tiles). • Teachers say a sound and students find the letter that spells that sound. • Students arrange the letters in a line on their board. • At the end of the activity, students track along the string, pointing to the letters/spellings and saying the matching sound.

Vowel Hop • Students have an index cards with vowels or letter cards. They tape the letters on the floor with spacing between. • Teachers call out a sound, and students hop to that vowel/vowel spelling. • Teachers then call out words containing one of the vowel spellings on the floor and students hop to the matching spelling.	Word Building • Students have lowercase letter manipulatives (magnetic letters, letter cards, letter tiles). • Teachers say a word and students build that word with the manipulative. • Teachers repeat this, only including the phonics that have been taught or are currently being learned.
Read For The Stars • Students have a partner and face one another to play. • Each student has a different color crayon/marker and they share one die. • Students roll, read the word closest to the road in the column number that matches the die rolled. • Students color the box for the word they read. • Whoever gets to the star at the top of the column first gets to color the star.	Sound House • Students have a copy of the Sound House. • Students find picture cards from the Couple Cards or provided clipart that begin/end with the blends given. • Students encode the word for the picture on the lines provided. • Once students choose and write all words (filling all lines), they draw each picture to make a picture in the house combining those words into one image.
Syllable Sort • Teachers cut out all the syllables for the specific story, providing one sheet's worth of syllables to each student. • Students try to put the syllables together to make words. • If this is difficult for students, help students to divide the syllables into 2-3 piles (beginning, ending, possible: middle).	Ending/Beginning Blend Match • Students have the specific blends match paper. • Students cut the blends off the bottom of the page, and decide which blend finished which word to glue in place. • Students write the entire word on the line below.
Word Building • Students have a letter manipulative of some kind (magnetic letter, letter tiles, letter cards, etc.). • Teachers give one of three options: 1. The entire word, helping students segment to find the correct sounds-spellings 2. The sounds of the word, helping students find the corresponding letters and blending to make the word 3. The letter names, helping students say each sound and blend • Teachers give the next word, helping students change the one sound that has changed in the word.	

Slow Down
Sounds

PRE-READING/DURING READING
1-3 minutes

Slow Down Sounds are sounds that can cause pause for students. These are either sound-spellings that need a quick explanation or a higher-level skill using known phonics that needs exposure or frontloading.

An effective way to identify and scaffold if students stumble on slow down sounds is to have student color these sounds with an orange or pink crayon prior to reading.

Examples:

- **ending -s:** The reason “ending -s” is difficult is that a three-letter CVC word turns into a longer word, adding to complexity. Students can cover the ‘s’ with their finger while decoding the CVC word, adding the s after blending the CVC word, to accommodate the added phoneme. Students can also use an orange crayon to color the “ending -s” throughout the book.
Examples: gets, mops, fits, hums
- **/ks/ spelled x:** “x” spells two sounds which adds complexity. Practicing the sound before reading frontloads a student's ability to decode with greater ease.
- **/z/ spelled s:** “s” can spell /z/, most often at the end of a word. When the letter 's' is after a vowel, another 's', or a voiced consonant, it spells /z/.
Examples: tags, dives, beds, was, has, is, his, messes
- **blends in a CVC book:** Express Readers books do not often contain a blend in the I Am Ready Book Sets or Step 1 Book Sets, but the added letter adds complexity. With blends, students know all the sounds, but adding an extra phoneme can cause an obstacle while decoding.
- **multisyllabic words/chunking:** Frontloading stories by modeling how to break apart longer words will help with fluency and confidence. Model how to pull apart a longer word, whether it is a compound word broken into the smaller words, or just a multisyllabic word that should be broken into its parts.

Examples:

in / side = inside	mis / hap = mishap	bas / ket = basket
in / ter/ est = interest	fire / truck = firetruck	lem / on = lemon

Phonemic Awareness is the understanding that the words we speak are made of sounds. Begin able to manipulate these sounds helps support reading a writing.

The activity here is a quick activity to practice skills that increase in difficulty as students advance. Phonemic awareness activities should show letters, but the purpose of the preliminary activities (in I Am Ready and Step 1) is the facilitate skills needed during fluent reading by frontloading. These activities are not a substitute for systematic instruction, but they allow practice before application to help with decoding and blending with automaticity during reading.

Example of sound recognition (early segmentation):

Can You Hear It? (from the Daily Dos) – Teachers ask students if they hear the sound /a/ in a list of spoken words. Teachers write "a" in a visible place. If students hear the sound, they put their hands on their head. If students do not hear the sound, they put their hands on their knees.

Word List: **sad, got, jam, pin, pat, bad, fit, hand, vet, past**

Example of auditory blending:

Bounce and Blend: (From the Daily Dos in the Express Readers' Program)

- Mime bouncing a basketball.
- Each time your hand pushes the ball down, say one sound.
- Bounce faster, saying the sounds continuously.
- Shoot the basketball at an invisible hoop as you say the blended word.

Example words to bounce:

/b/-/u/-/g/	/w/-/e/-/t/	/s/-/u/-/n/
/k/-/a/-/n/	/n/-/o/-/t/	/t/-/i/-/p/

Example of segmenting:

Stomp It Out: (from the Daily Dos) – Teachers say a word. Teachers help students to stomp on each sound in that word. If stomping is not preferred, students can also clap, pound fists, hop, etc.

The following words only have 3 phonemes.

rug, big, map, hut, fun, pit, tip, can

Sticky Words

PRE-READING

1-3 minutes

Sticky words are words that have sound spellings that are irregular or have not been learned yet.

Orthographic mapping is a process that happens in the brain by which the brain maps certain letter patterns for automaticity/instant recognition of a word. This process isn't taught, but by helping students visually map words, we can facilitate the process and make difficult words easier for students.

Noting irregular spellings or unlearned sound-spellings can be done by highlighting, hearting, circling, "splatting" the sticky spelling with yellow, etc. The way of noting is not as important as the identifying itself.

Write the sticky words in a visible space or have students write it on a white board or paper. Use one of the ways to highlight the sticky spelling within that word.

Explain to students what is sticky about the sound-spelling or asking if they can notice what is odd about the sound being made by the spelling in the word.

Specific to Express Readers Books:

- Teachers tell students to "put honey on the sticky words because they are STICKY." If using a reproducible copy, students can highlight or color with a yellow crayon every time they find a sticky word in their book.

"A sticky word is a word you can get stuck on! Don't get stuck on the sticky words. They have a STICKY spelling in them."

This does not need to be an extended activity, but support activities can be utilized before or after the reading to help further the recognition and mapping of these words.

Further support and review activities for sticky words:

Sticky Word Detective

- Students have a Sticky Word Detective sheet, a consumable decodable book, or some other copied text.
- Students highlight a specific sticky word/sight word as many times as they find it in the text.

Splat Sounds

- Students have a list of sight words/sticky words.
- Teachers say a word from the list out loud. Students decide which spelling in the sound is "sticky."
- Students "splat" that sound or color it with a yellow crayon or highlighter.
- Teachers repeat this on every word in the list.

Sound Mapping Sheets

- Students have a page of Elkonin boxes or a "Sound Mapping" sheet.
- Students map each sound from a word in one box.
- Students then color in the sound or sounds that are not spelled as they should be (according to the rules learned) or the sounds that have not been learned yet.

Splat Words

- Teachers layout index cards or pieces of paper with sight words/sticky words that have been previously learned (and mapped) on a carpet or a table.
- Students have a fly swatter.
- Teachers call out a word, and students "splat" that word with the fly swatter
- Teachers repeat calling out words while students swat the words.

Vocabulary
PRE-READING/DURING READING 1-5 minutes

Vocabulary can be identified and discussed before reading OR immediately on the page the word is used. Vocabulary plays a key role in comprehension, as all students come to reading with different sets of background knowledge. If a student has never been exposed to a word prior to reading, decoding has no meaning to connect to, making comprehension improbable.

Vocabulary is also not entirely made of long words. Very small words can have shades of meaning (lots of different meanings or uses) or not be in the vocabulary set for specific cultures or home settings.

It is essential to leveling the playing-field for students that we do not ASSUME that students have heard, used, or learned a word's meaning.

Discussion and identification can be sufficient for some students, but others might need further activities or review.

Vocabulary support activities:

Tricky Dictionary <i>See the Tricky Dictionary versions.</i> - Teachers provide the vocabulary words to be input into the dictionary. - Students write the meaning, and a sentence using the word in the correct capacity. - This activity is higher-level, to be used with capable writers.	Sentence Writing - This is a very basic activity that can be done in <u>writing or orally</u>. - Students have a short list of words that have previously been discussed. - Students must use each word in a sentence that shows the meaning of the word.
Making Couple Cards - Using pairs of index cards, students write a word on one of the cards and draw the matching picture on the other. - Once students have a set of cards, they can exchange cards with a partner and attempt to match the other student's cards as an extension.	Word Hunt <i>See the Word Hunt versions.</i> - Students must find and illustrate various words from the book being read. - This activity can also be done based on phonics structure, such as finding words that contain "a_e." - This activity helps support language accusation and attention to words in the text.

Odd One Out

- Teachers provide sets of words that have similar means and one that doesn't.
- Students assess the meanings of each word to find the odd one out.

Emerging Level Examples:

- end, finish, complete, start
- glad, happy, glum, joyful

Higher Level Example:

- disagree, concur, quarrel, bicker

Morpheme Mapping

- Students pull a word apart into its smallest morphemes.
- Teachers help students to identify what each morpheme means.
- Teachers can give alternate morphemes to swap.
- Examples:
dis - like, dis - tract, un - help - ful

Fluency comes with practice and repeated readings but can be supported with pre-activities to encourage automaticity during reading.

Fluency activities might not be necessary past a certain point in development or with specific students but can be very beneficial for all students when beginning to learn to read or upon the first use of a specific phonics structure.

Fluency facilitates comprehension, as students can decode without effort and can spend their energy on understanding WHAT they are reading (not focusing on HOW).

Fluency activities:

Pyramids <i>(aka. sentence pyramids)</i> - Students have the Pyramids paper that corresponds to the book OR teachers can write a pyramid on the board. - Students practice reading a sentence by adding one word at a time.	Blending Lines - Students have the Blending Lines paper for the story. - Each blending lines begins with sound-spellings, students touch each spelling and say the sound it spells. - Students practice blending review words, focus sound-spelling words, and challenge words from the story in isolation. - Students also practice reading sticky words to help with automaticity before reading the book. Accommodation: Highlight the sticky spelling in each sticky word.
Phrasing - Teachers provide sentences where words are chunked together in meaningful phrases. - Teachers can also provide the longer sentences, and practice allowing students to mark lines and chunk the phrases. <u>Example:</u> When the sun has set, the pals have a bonfire and roast snacks on sticks. When the sun has set, / the pals have a bonfire / and roast snacks / on sticks.	Scooping - Teachers provide sentences and students practice drawing a scoop line underneath meaningful phrases to form a group. - Teachers model this scooping and allow students to try independently with immediate feedback. <u>Example:</u> He tips up a box on a stick and adds a snack. He tips up a box on a stick and adds a snack.

General Instruction:

- Teachers explain that:
 - it is ok to read slowly and carefully. Reading slowly and carefully will help us avoid making mistakes.
 - if a passage or book has been difficult or slow to read, students should RE-READ for comprehension and understanding. When words are read too slowly, it is hard to recall their meaning or to understand what you just read.
 - if a passage or book is read too slowly out loud, it is difficult for others to understand.
- Teachers explain that when we read out loud, we need to:
 - use intonation. Using a monotone or "boring" voice makes a story uninteresting and sometimes difficult to understand. (Teachers give an example, such as saying the same 2-3 sentences with expression, and then in a monotone voice. Teachers asking students which way was more interesting.)
 - "read punctuation," or allow for expression based on marking, allow for pausing or taking a breath. (Teachers give an example by ignoring punctuation in 2-3 sentences, blurring the sentences, without breath or pause, and without expression.)
 - read with a rhythm and consistent pace. Reading stories or text requires pacing and reading the words with a bit of rhythm. (Teachers give an example by reading 2-3 sentences with random pauses and breaks and then reading 2-3 sentences with rhythm and proper pacing.)
 - reading with a pace that is not too slow or too fast. Some punctuation and need for expression can speed up or slow down reading, but for the most part, we do not want to rush reading or slow it down to the point of losing comprehension. (Teachers give an example by reading too quickly and then too slowly.)
- Teachers explain that "reading slowly is a wonderful way to discover the words and avoid making mistakes, but we often need to re-read text in order to understand and to make the story 'come alive' and be interesting!"

Higher Level Fluency Activity:**Express Theater**

- Teachers explain that:
 - Theater and plays are when people act or show a story.
 - A script is the text that helps actors know what to say, and actors must practice their script multiple times to remember the words and read with fluency and expression.
 - Reading with fluency is reading smoothly and with a proper rate and breath-taking.
- Teachers model the effect fluency and expression have on ability to comprehend by:
 - reading part of the script in a monotone/robotic voice
 - reading a sentence leaving large pauses between each word
 - reading a section of the script quickly with no pauses or without taking breaths
 - reading a sentence very quietly, almost inaudibly for the students to hear
- After providing an example of reading in ways that make comprehending difficult, teachers ask students if they understood the reading or found it interesting to listen to.
- Teachers remind students that it is perfectly acceptable to read slowly and carefully, but that a script is to be practiced so students can identify the words quickly and read with more ease.
- Students are in groups of two or more.
- Students choose or are given a role in the Express Theater.
- Students highlight their part in the script.
- Students use a yellow crayon to color all sticky words prior to reading.

- Students color every first letter of a sentence with a green crayon to signify when to begin a sentence and color every end mark with a red crayon to signify when to pause and take a breath.
- Students practice reading the script multiple times, as a group or independently, asking teachers for clarification if there are words or sounds that are difficult to identify.

NOTE: The Express Scripts are designed with minimal sticky words to allow students to practice decodable words with automaticity and to read with fluency and tone.

- Students practice reading their parts, one at a time. If students err in a sentence, students are encouraged to try the entire sentence again to allow others to understand the content by hearing the whole sentence.

OPTIONAL/SUGGESTED:

Students come back together as a class to read their play for other students.

By asking students and facilitating discussion, students can work through their own thoughts and ideas while reading a book. This process is done out loud and with immediate support, allowing students to progress to internalizing comprehension the stories being read in the future.

Partner activities are a topic or question that students turn to a partner to discuss or answer. Teachers can help students practice speaking with a partner and listening to responses. This format allows students more response time during a lesson, as it can be difficult to make time to hear every student's ideas on a topic.

Reading in a group: (5-7 minutes)

- Teachers read the book with students using coral reading (reading slowly at the same time). Choral reading is the most effective reading for a decodable book, allowing each child to try applying their phonics knowledge and sight word vocabulary to a given text.
- NOTE: As students progress and gain confidence, teachers can change the structure or allow students to read pages individually, but given that response time is important, students reading at the same time allows all students the opportunity to be involved.
- Teachers help students to track the sentences while reading, to say sounds according to letter to sound correlations, to find the sight words/sticky words and use prior knowledge to read those words, to pause reading at end marks and understand where sentences begin, and to model proper book handling in general.
- Teachers should be able to physically touch each student's book, allowing for silent prompts and redirection for individual students.
- Teachers help students to self-correct when making mistakes in reading by:
 - identifying whether the word is decodable or not (Is it a sticky word?)
 - looking back at the letters and slowly saying each sound in order
- Teachers use this time to give immediate feedback on decoding, blending, tone, and fluency. Teachers can help students to reread a sentence with expression based on the story or the punctuation marks.
- Teachers lead a group discussion with students based on the questions given.

**Reading Practice
(x1-2)**

After group reading (with a teacher)
5-10 minutes

Fluency and accuracy often require repeated readings, but 2-3 times is usually sufficient, so after the group reading, students should practice one to two times more.

The goal is for students to eventually read in their minds, but as students are learning, reading out loud is important. It helps with fluency, hearing the sounds being made, and making meaning of decoded words.

Ways to do repeated reading:

Partner Reading • Students read with a partner, taking turns or at the same time. • Students can switch off pages if it is the same book or read in time with each other. • If students switch off, the student who is not reading should track with their finger.	Whisper Reading • Students read aloud but in a whisper voice. • Students should be loud enough for teachers to hear separate words but not so loud that they interrupt or bother other students.
Buddy Reading • Students read to a "book buddy." • A book buddy can be a stuffed animal, a plastic figure, a plant, etc. • Students should pretend that their buddy is alive and listening, reading with expression to make the book fun to listen too.	Autograph Reading • Students have an autograph sheet or a printable decodable book that belongs to them. • Students read their book to a peer or teacher who autographs the back of the decodable or the autograph sheet once they are done.
Whisper Phone Reading • Students use a whisper phone (can be made from PVC pipe or store bought) to hear their own voice as they read.	Recorded Reading • Students record themselves reading on a computer or tablet. • Students listen back to their own reading and track along the book as they listen.

Writing sound-spellings helps to make the representation of a sound more permanent. These activities should involve the physical act of writing, not just using a manipulative.

Writing can be done on paper, on a white board/chalk board, on a tablet with a tablet pen, etc. The key is to have their hands forming the letter or letters that represent each sound.

Ways to do writing practice:

White Board Chains • Help students to write a starter word on their white board. Either provide the sounds to write or the letters, but blend and decode the word together. • Tell students to remove/erase one sound. • Provide a new letter by only saying the sound it spells, and have students decode that word. CHALLENGE: provide a new word that only has one different sound and ask students to figure out which sound changed.	Dictation • Say a word for students to write. • Scaffold by segmenting each sound in the word slowly to help. • As students progress in skills, dictate a sentence that includes sight words learned, but ensure those sight words have been thoroughly practiced and mapped. Sound-to-Letter Dictation • Say the sound of a letter for students to write. • Students write on paper or a white board to create a line of letters.
Writing Prompt • Give a short prompt, such as a topic or question to answer. • Students use invented spelling based on the sounds they have learned to write 1-3 sentences in response. • To support progress, teachers should not edit student words, but point out words that can be spelled correctly by listening to the spoken sounds. • Immediate feedback is helpful for development, but overediting can hinder the thought process involved in writing. • Students should be taught and utilize proper sentence structure with a capital letter to start, finger spaces between words, and an end mark.	Story Writing <i>See provided template for Story Writing.</i> • Students choose 4 words from the book to write at the top of the page. • Students must use those words in their writing. • Students can illustrate their writing. Write a Letter <i>See provided templates for Write a Letter.</i> • Students choose a character to write a letter to. • Students can discuss a problem, a solution to a problem, a personal story that connects to the book, etc.

Comprehension is not taught but guided through activities and discussion. By requiring students to recall events or details, think about parts of stories, and discuss topics, we can scaffold the process of reflecting on, evaluating, and comprehending a story with all its elements.

Part of the comprehension is done immediately, during the initial reading, but we should explicitly teach and practice finding elements in stories from the start, such as character, setting, sequencing, problem and solution, major events, etc.

Comprehension activities are provided in the guide since some stories lend themselves to a better element focus, but the activity can be exchanged for one of the activities below.

Reading Comprehension Activities:

Tool Kit Reading Comprehension - This activity involves the printed consumable, Tool Kit, by Express Readers. - Each decodable book comes with reading comprehension pages (found in the corresponding Tool Kit) that are decodable at the level of the book being read. - The activities include pages such as: comprehension of text, sequencing, true/false, cloze activity, questions, etc.	Sequencing Strips <i>See the printable activity Sequencing Strips.</i> - This activity is provided as a printable for specific books, giving a printable base strip and three pictures from the book to be put in order. - Students cut out the pictures, describe what is happening in each picture, and arrange the pictures in order of occurrence. - Students glue the pictures on the strip.
Sequencing: Beginning, Middle, End <i>See the printable activity Sequencing versions.</i> - Using the provided Sequencing Sheet, students decide on what happens at the beginning of the story, in the middle, and at the end. - Students illustrate and write a sentence for each section.	Setting Activity <i>See the printable Setting Activity versions.</i> - Using the provided Setting Activity version appropriate to student development, teachers support discussion on the setting of the book (or one of the settings). - Students illustrate and write a sentence describing the setting.
Problem and Solution <i>See the printable Problem and Solution versions.</i> - Teachers are often prompted to help students identify the problem and solution in a story. - Students draw a picture and write a sentence about the problem and the solution in the story.	Major Events <i>See the printable Major Events versions.</i> - Students illustrate and write a sentence about different major events in a story. - Teachers explain that major events are those that have an impact on the story line.

Book Elements Folding Planner <i>See the printable Book Elements Folding Planner.</i> • The Book Elements Folding Planner asks for students to identify the character (choose one if there are multiples), the setting, the problem, and the solution. • Students draw a picture and summarize in one sentence. • This activity is a higher-level activity, to be used after practicing the individual elements through other activities.	Question Quest <i>See the printable Questions Quest versions.</i> • Students have a partner. • Students come up with questions about the book for another student to answer. • Teachers can write question words in a visible place and discuss various types of questions. • The partner must then use their book to answer the questions. • This activity requires a higher-level ability to write and should only be done when writing has developed past simple sentence structure.
Compare and Contrast <i>See the printable Compare and Contrast versions.</i> • This activity is used to compare and contrast two different books/stories. • Students find the commonalities in the stories and what sets them apart. • Teachers should model this evaluation with different stories prior to students ever doing this activity independently.	Character Review <i>See the printable Character Review versions.</i> • Character Reviews are a summary of the character in the book. • Different versions are provided to allow for levels of difficulty based on the readers age development, writing capabilities, and skill set. Teachers choose the appropriate version for this activity. Some of the versions allow for opinion.
Thought Reports <i>See the printable Thought Report versions.</i> • Thought Reports are based on the reader's opinion of the book. • Different versions are provided to allow for levels of difficulty based on the readers age development, writing capabilities, and skill set. Teachers choose the appropriate version for this activity. • Students decide if they liked or did not like the book, recording their opinion. Students fill in the appropriate information, giving reasons for their opinion, either written or spoken.	Book Explorer <i>See the printable Book Explorer versions.</i> • This activity is the most basic of all the given activities and can be used with other stories as a review of opinion. • Students merely draw their favorite part and decide whether they like the book or not.