

Literacy How-To: Matching Text to Task

Types of Text

The types of text we use with students evolve across the stages of reading development. They reflect the oral language of students and their facility in using the code to figure out words (i.e., "learn to read"), and the eventual shift to "read to learn." Accordingly, we can label the types of text, their characteristics and purposes as predictable, decodable, and authentic, described here.

The following sentence illustrates highly decodable text.

My hat is big and red.

This text uses a combination of

- High frequency words (*my* and *is*) usually memorized in early grades because they use less-common letter-sound associations (e.g., **y** representing long **i**)
- Words composed of letters representing their most frequently used sounds (e.g., consonants **h**, **t**, **b**, **g**, **r**, and **d**; short vowel sounds for **a** and **i**); letter-sound associations that students would have learned by the time they attempted to read the sentence.

The decodability of this sample sentence is predicated on the phonetic regularity of the words and the match to previous phonics instruction.¹

¹ Cheatham and Allor, 2012

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Why Use Decodable Text?

In working with teachers in the classroom, we find that many don't understand the purpose or appreciate the value of decodable texts. Beginning readers need to practice decoding words with phonetically regular patterns. Choose decodable texts that feature words with patterns (syllable types) that you've explicitly taught. Not only will this help students develop automaticity in the word-form area of the brain, it will also prevent students' over-reliance on context clues and

pictures—ineffective strategies for developing accurate and automatic word recognition. Reading decodable texts allows students to tackle new words and practice familiar ones, fortifying their reliance on and mastery of decoding as a strategy.

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203-239-7323

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Our Mission is to EMPOWER TEACHERS to ensure that every child learns to read by third grade.

100 Broadway 2nd Floor | North Haven, CT 06473 US

