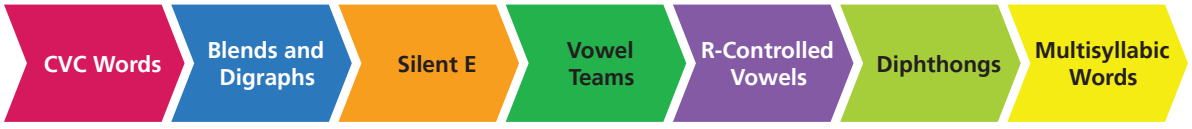
Decodable Texts Research Brief

Heinemann

Research Foundations of Jump Rope Readers Decodables Series

The Jump Rope Readers is a decodable text system designed to support beginning readers, from the earliest stages of decoding development to the advanced. The collection is built upon a systematic, cumulative phonics sequence that ensures children can successfully decode increasingly complex texts, all the while engaging with rich, highly comprehensible stories. The sequence provides built-in review opportunities, enabling readers to consolidate previously-taught phonics concepts, and the relatable cast of fantasy characters draws readers in and keeps them reading. After all, motivated, successful reading practice results in more motivated, successful reading. This brief outlines the research that underpins the series, emphasizing its alignment with best practices in reading instruction and phonics pedagogy.

With a scope and sequence that complements the progression of most state standards and is aligned to a phonics progression that informs most phonics curricula, the Jump Rope Readers offer meaningful opportunities for students to apply phonics skills in connected texts, making them a flexible tool for daily literacy instruction. The fiction series begins very simply, introducing a new phonics concept along with one or two high-frequency words in each book. From there, each subsequent book builds on prior learning, introducing one or two letter-sound correspondences along with a couple new high-frequency words. The nonfiction series corresponds to the fiction series and provides students with additional targeted phonics practice while they explore high-interest science and social studies topics. Throughout both series, cumulative review is embedded, allowing students to consolidate previously taught concepts before moving on to new ones. This intentional progression supports steady growth in decoding and reading confidence.



Scope and Sequence for the Jump Rope Readers

Overview

Learning to read is one of the most significant milestones in a child's education, and decodable texts play a crucial role in this journey. These specially designed books align with sequenced phonics instruction, allowing children to apply what they've learned about letters and sounds to real words and stories. This connection builds confidence, fluency, and comprehension skills that form the foundation for literacy.

Decodable texts are supported by decades of research. Studies show that systematic, explicit phonics instruction—paired with practice in decodable texts—is the most effective way to teach early reading skills. By giving children texts that match their phonics knowledge, we set them up for success and prevent the frustration that can come from encountering words beyond their skill level.

We embrace this evidence-based approach. Our decodable books are thoughtfully designed to make learning to read both effective and delightful, ensuring that every child experiences the joy of turning letters into stories.

The Jump Rope Readers follow a systematic research-based phonics progression. Each book provides concentrated decoding practice with new phonics features, building skills step by step. This intentional approach ensures that readers gain confidence with new concepts while reinforcing previously learned skills. By introducing phonics concepts in a cumulative sequence, the Jump Rope Readers support steady growth in decoding ability and reading confidence.

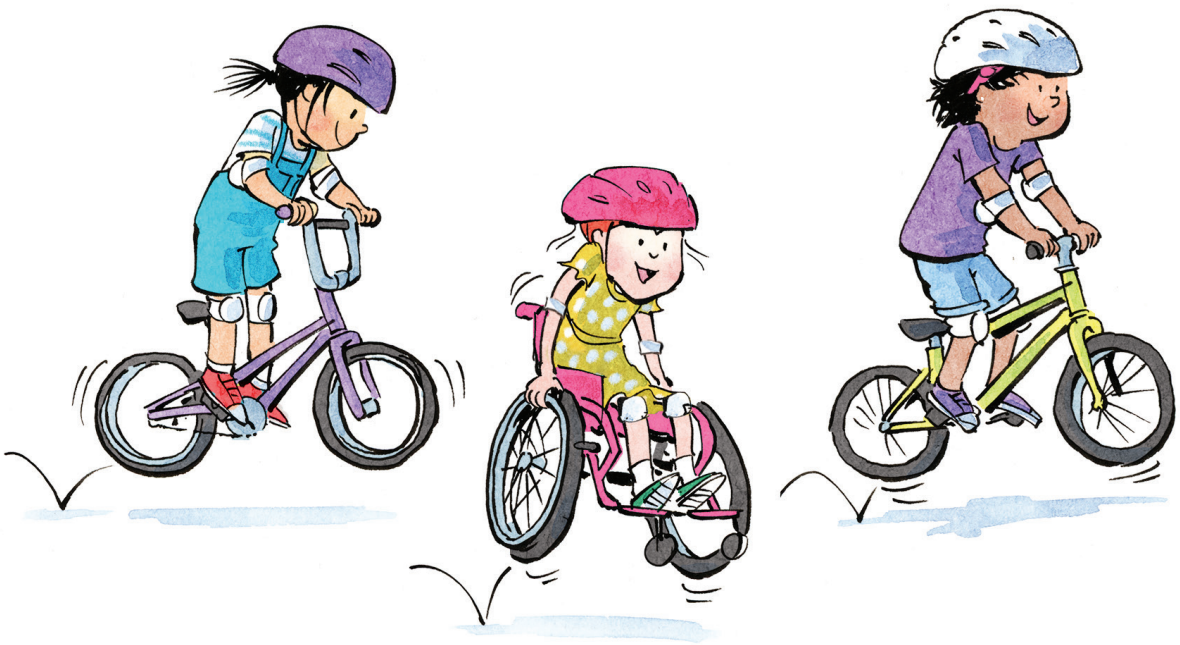
The Importance of Systematic Phonics Instruction and the Development of Word Recognition

Decades of research, including findings from the National Reading Panel (2000) and subsequent studies, underscore the critical role of phonics in early reading instruction. The Jump Rope Readers rest on several key principles from this vast body of research.

- **Application:** Phonics instruction "sticks" when it is applied (Blevins, 2020).
- **Sequence:** A phonics progression of increasing complexity, introduced incrementally, will build foundational decoding skills (Beck & Beck, 2013).
- **Repetition:** Repeated exposure to phonetically regular words aids word recognition and facilitates orthographic mapping, which bridges the transition from decoding to fluent reading (Gonzalez-Frey & Ehri, 2020).

APPLICATION AND SEQUENCE

Decodable texts allow readers the essential opportunity to apply the phonics concepts they are learning (Blevins, 2020). The Jump Rope Readers follow a structured progression, beginning with simpler phonics concepts, like short vowels, and moving to more advanced topics like vowel teams, R-controlled vowels, and multisyllabic words. This is consistent with research by Beck and Beck (2013), which emphasizes the importance of introducing phonics patterns incrementally to build foundational decoding skills.

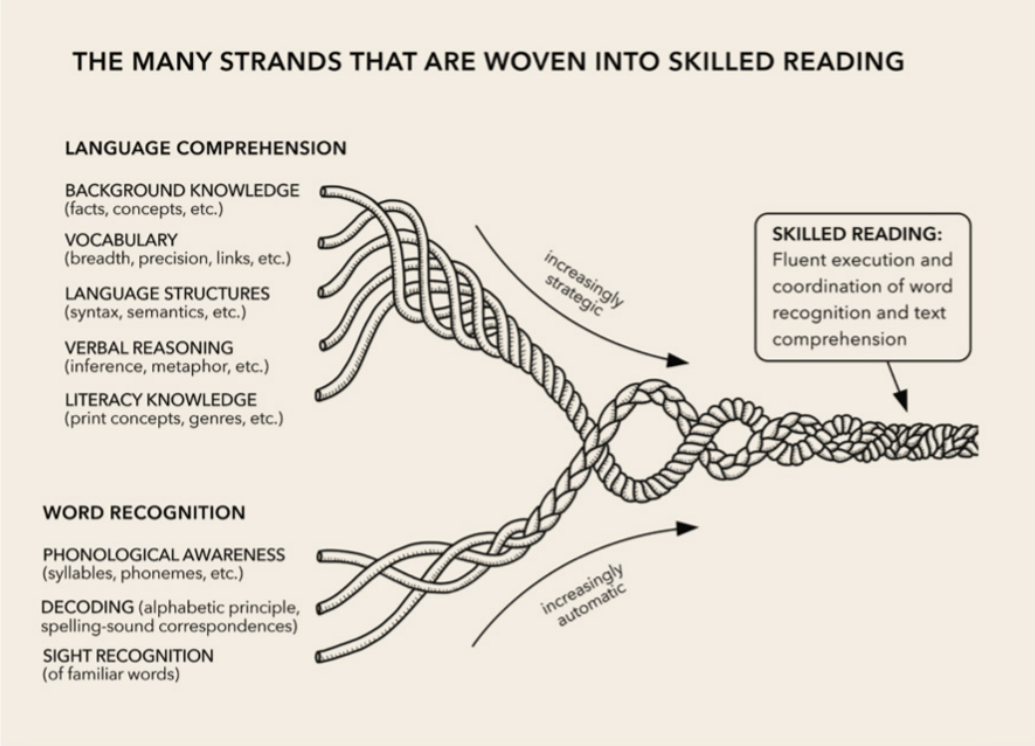


REPETITION

Decodable texts feature a high proportion of phonetically regular words to support early decoding skills. Studies by Cheatham and Allor (2012) and Mesmer (2005) highlight how decodable texts improve early reading fluency and comprehension by offering repetitive practice with phonics rules. Further, Gonzalez-Frey and Ehri (2020) discuss how repeated exposure to phonetically regular words aids orthographic mapping, which in turn facilitates the transition from decoding to fluent reading. The Jump Rope Readers scope and sequence is intentionally cumulative: each new book introduces one or two letter-sound correspondences and high-frequency words while consistently reviewing previously taught patterns and vocabulary. This structure ensures that students continue to practice earlier skills across the series, supporting mastery through ongoing exposure and review. For example, later series in both fiction and nonfiction continue to feature words and patterns from earlier books, allowing students to consolidate learning as they progress. Repeated exposure to words within and across books is essential for building sight vocabulary, as described by Ehri (2014) and Kilpatrick (2015). Orthographic mapping requires multiple encounters with words to reinforce memory and fluency.

Additionally, Jump Rope Readers offer a scope and sequence of high-frequency words. Duke and Mesmer (2016) suggest that teaching high-frequency words systematically, alongside decoding, accelerates early literacy development. The Jump Rope Readers balance phonetically regular words with high-frequency irregular words (e.g., "said," "the") to better reflect natural language while introducing critical vocabulary.

On average, the Jump Rope Readers are more than 70% decodable and more than 90% "readable," meaning the combination of decodable words plus high-frequency words that are part of the scope and sequence is above 90%. In addition to irregular or temporarily irregular high-frequency words, the books also include a small percentage of non-decodable "story words" that allow them to convey richer content. The Jump Rope Readers align with the findings of researchers Heidi Ann Mesmer (2012), Jim Cunningham, and Freddy Hiebert (1999), who argue that beginner books should strike a balance between phonetically regular words and irregular high-frequency words. As these researchers have suggested, a balance supports the acquisition of both decoding skill and sight vocabulary while better approximating the rhythms of natural language. The vibrant illustrations communicate big ideas, even when the words are limited, and move readers toward deep comprehension.



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Hollis Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001) illustrates the intertwined nature of word recognition and language comprehension in skilled reading. The Jump Rope Readers are carefully controlled to promote successful decoding and they strive to sound natural and tell compelling stories that resonate with children. The vibrant illustrations communicate big ideas, even when the words are limited, and move readers toward deep comprehension. As the available words increase, the stories become longer and more complex with more sophisticated vocabulary and character arcs, so they grow right alongside readers.

CONCLUSION

The Jump Rope Readers series is grounded in a robust body of literacy research. By adhering to evidence-based principles of phonics instruction, incorporating consistent cumulative review inside engaging and comprehensible stories, the series empowers new readers to develop essential reading skills. It serves as a valuable tool for educators committed to fostering early literacy and ensuring all students achieve reading success.

The Jump Rope Readers series is grounded in a robust body of literacy research.

References

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JUMP ROPE READERS

Scan below to learn more about the Jump Rope Readers.

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