



## Phonics Classroom Activity

# Decodable Readers—Set 4

## Overview

This set builds on students' foundational knowledge of short vowels, long vowels, blends, and digraphs. Readers are introduced to r-controlled vowels, where the letter r changes the vowel sound, sometimes called the “bossy r” patterns. Through repeated exposure in engaging stories, students practice reading these patterns automatically while strengthening fluency and comprehension.

## Why This Set Matters

R-controlled vowels are among the most common vowel patterns in English, and one of the trickiest for developing readers. Learning these patterns helps students decode unfamiliar words more efficiently, improving reading accuracy, fluency, and overall understanding of text.

**Focus:** R-Controlled Vowels

**Target Letters and Patterns:**

ar, or, er / ir / ur

**Grade Range:** 1-2

**Goal:** Help developing readers recognize and decode r-controlled vowel patterns in connected text while building fluency, accuracy, and comprehension.

## Materials Needed

- Printed foldable readers
- Pencils or crayons
- Highlighters or colored pencils
- Optional: reading journal, sticky notes

## Instructions

- 1. Introduce the Focus Pattern(s):** Write the target pattern on the board (ar, or, or er / ir / ur) and read a few sample words together before students open their readers.
- 2. Model a First Read:** Use choral reading, echo reading, or partner reading. Demonstrate how to identify the r-controlled vowel pattern and blend the sounds smoothly.
- 3. Independent or Take-Home Reading:** Allow students to reread independently or with a caregiver. Encourage multiple readings to build fluency and confidence.

4. **Optional Response Activity:** Ask students to go back through their reader and circle or highlight every word with the focus pattern, then count them together.

## Tips for Differentiation

- Before reading, introduce the “bossy r” concept: the letter r changes the vowel sound that comes before it. Practice saying ar, or, and er / ir / ur in isolation with a few familiar words before opening the reader.
- Use word sorts to build pattern recognition. Write ar, or, and er / ir / ur as column headers and ask students to place word cards under the right column before or after reading.
- For students who need support with longer words, model how to “chunk” by syllable first (for example, “farm” stays as one chunk, but “morning” becomes “mor” and “ning”) before blending the full word.
- For students who are ready to extend, ask them to think of three words they know that follow the focus pattern and use one in an original sentence.

## During Reading Questions

- Which r-controlled pattern did this reader focus on? Can you name two words from the story that used it?
- Was there a word in the story that was harder than you expected? How did you figure it out?
- Can you think of one more word with the same pattern that was not in the reader?

## Wrap-Up Questions

- What r-controlled vowel pattern did you practice today?
- Which word was easiest to read? Which was most challenging?
- Can you think of another word that uses the same pattern?
- How did rereading help you become a stronger reader?
- What was your favorite part of the story?

Each foldable reader focuses on a specific r-controlled vowel pattern and provides repeated opportunities to practice decoding words in connected text. Readers gradually expose students to the most common r-controlled vowel spellings through fun, age-appropriate stories.

## Reader 1: The Shark at the Park

**Focus Pattern:** ar

**Examples:** shark, park, dark, bark, sharp, far

Mark went to the park with his dad. A giant shark statue stood beside the path.

“Look at its sharp teeth!” Mark said. As they walked closer, the sky began to grow dark.

A small dog gave a loud bark near the shark. Mark took a picture and said, “This is the best part of the park by far!”

## Reader 2: The Corner Store

**Focus Pattern:** or

**Examples:** corner, store, storm, porch, short

Mia hurried to the corner store after school. She wanted to buy a snack before the storm arrived.

Dark clouds covered the sky. “That storm looks strong,” said the store owner.

Mia waited on the porch until the rain stopped. Then she carried her snack home on the short walk back.

## Reader 3: The Bird Contest

**Focus Pattern:** ir, er

**Examples:** bird, first, perch, chirp, flutter

A bright bird sat on a perch by the river. It hoped to win the forest singing contest.

When it was the bird’s turn, it chirped loudly. “I will do my best,” the bird told itself.

The bird sang first and impressed the judges. Soon it was named the winner and fluttered into the air.

## Reader 4: The Purple Turtle Rescue

**Focus Pattern:** ur

**Examples:** turtle, turn, purple, hurried, curly

Ben spotted a purple turtle beside a muddy trail. The turtle could not turn because it was stuck.

“Don’t worry. I’ll help you,” Ben said. He gave the turtle a gentle push with a sturdy branch.

The turtle hurried away and disappeared behind some curly ferns. Ben smiled as he walked away into the woods.

## Reader 5: The Surfing Bird

**Focus Pattern:** ar, or, ir, er, ur

**Examples:** surf, bird, porch, smart, storm, fern, girl

A smart little bird sat on the porch. He wanted to surf before a big storm arrived.

A girl saw the bird jump on a short board. He did a quick turn on the wave and flew past the dark shore.

“That was the best surf by far!” the girl chirped. The bird returned to his perch with a big smile.

## Reader 6: The Forest Party

**Focus Pattern:** ar, or, ur

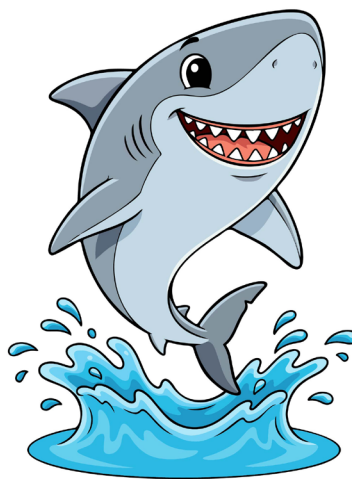
**Examples:** forest, party, turtle, bird, perk, horn, start

The animals held a big party in the dark forest. A purple turtle played a loud horn to start the fun.

The first bird sang a sweet song from her perch. A smart fox did a quick turn near the tall bark of a tree.

They ate sweet corn and worked hard to clean up the yard. It was the best forest party by far.

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with his dad. A giant  
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## The Shark at the Park

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