

Word Decoding Flashcards

Parent User Guide & Companion Manual

Welcome!

Welcome to the Word Decoding Flashcards companion guide! This application, brought to you by **Phonogram University**, is designed to help your child develop strong phonics, word recognition, and reading fluency. By focusing on fundamental phonogram sounds rather than rote memorization, your child will learn how to look at a word and confidently decode it.

Understanding the App Design

Modern English spelling is logical when broken down into phonograms (single letters or multi-letter combinations that represent specific sounds). The app helps parents and children interact with these concepts using two distinct modes:

1. Practice Modes

- **“By Lesson” Mode:** In this mode, children practice words selected from their current lesson along with review words from previous lessons. Words are presented in plain text (without colored target highlights) so your child can practice real-world reading. Clicking on a word displays its special coded image/markup if it has spelling rules, or lets you know if only first sounds are used.
- **“By Phonogram” Mode:** This mode targets a specific phonogram (like 'sh', 'th', 'ea', or 'ay'). The app filters words containing that phonogram and highlights the phonogram letters in **bold purple** within the word. This visual coding trains your child's eyes to see multi-letter spelling patterns instead of individual letters.

2. Coded Words vs. Simple Words

When clicking on a word card, the app provides additional information about how the word is constructed:

- **Coded Words:** If the word contains spelling rules or phonograms making sounds other than the first sound (such as 'he', 'make', or 'heavy'), clicking the card will display a Coded View featuring the hand-coded visual phonogram markup representing its spelling rules.
- **Simple Words:** If a word is built entirely using sounds with no special rules (such as 'sad', 'main', or 'ouch'), clicking the card displays the message: "Only first sounds and no spelling rules are involved." This lets you and your child know that the word should be decoded using only the most basic, first sound of each phonogram.

PARENT TIP: Basic words like "sad" or "big" do not have coded markings because they are already read in their simplest phonetic form. Instruct your child to read them using only their first/basic sounds. This includes multiple-letter phonograms that make their first sound.

Key Control Options for Parents

Max Lesson Selection

Use this selector to match the lessons your child has completed. The app will only display words from the selected lesson and prior lessons. This ensures your child is never frustrated by words containing patterns they haven't learned yet.

Voice and Audio Speed Selection

The app features high-quality Google TTS voices. For children learning to decode, listening to fast speech can make it difficult to hear individual sounds. We recommend setting the Speed selector to 70% or 80%. This slows down the pronunciation, making the individual phonograms and blends much easier to distinguish.

Heteronyms (Words with Multiple Sounds)

Some words in English look identical but are pronounced differently depending on context (heteronyms). The app automatically recognizes these and allows you to hear both pronunciations when clicking the audio speaker button. The supported heteronyms include:

- **live:** Pronounced as short 'i' rhyming with 'give', and long 'i' rhyming with 'hive'.
- **bow:** Pronounced as 'bow' rhyming with 'cow', and 'bow' rhyming with 'arrow'.
- **sow:** Pronounced as 'sow' rhyming with 'cow' (meaning a pig), and 'sow' rhyming with 'sew' (to plant).

A Simple Routine for Practice

Here is a recommended 5-minute practice flow you can do with your child daily:

1. **Select the Max Lesson** that your child is currently studying or has just finished.
2. **Start in “By Lesson” Mode.** Have your child look at the flashcard and attempt to read the word aloud.
3. **Click the word card.** This will play the audio pronunciation and show the Coded View modal, if applicable. If they see the 'Only first sounds' message, explain to them that there are no secret rules here—just read the basic sounds.
4. **Switch to “By Phonogram” Mode** to review a specific sound they might be struggling with (like 'ee' or 'sh'). Point out how the letters are colored to show they stick together to make a single sound.

5. **Keep it short.** A single session generates 10 cards. Refresh using the reload button for a new batch, but 5-10 minutes a day is all it takes to see consistent progress!

Happy Reading! — The Phonogram University Team