

Heart words flashcards

What are Heart words?

In the Little Learners decodable books, there are a few high-frequency words that children cannot decode yet. We call these 'Heart words' because children need to learn them by heart to read them. Many Heart words become decodable later in the program when children have more knowledge of the alphabetic code. A few Heart words will not become decodable – they are irregular or use uncommon phoneme–grapheme correspondences.

Why do we teach Heart words?

Heart words are a combination of high-frequency words and interest words that are needed to create a story. At Stages 1 and 2, the Heart words *the* and *I* allow children to read and write whole sentences and stories.

What Heart words do we learn in each stage?

Stages 1 and 2: *my My the The I*. These are high-frequency words that children need to learn by heart to read automatically in the decodable books. However, you can point out the parts of the word they may already know, for example the /m/ in *my* and *My*. The important part of the word *the* is teaching the articulation of /th/ – where the tongue pokes out between teeth. We include Heart words with and without capitals for the earlier stages, to help children become familiar with how the words look.

Stage 3: *he she we to do was*. Follow the same teaching approach as in Stages 1 and 2 when teaching these Heart words. Children will practise these words when reading the Pip and Tim and The Wiz Kids series. The new Heart word *do* is introduced in The Wiz Kids. At this stage, children are building up a bank of words that they can recognise automatically.

Stage 4: *her of are too for see*. Children will be familiar with the concept of Heart words and the difference in approach to reading an unknown decodable word. Practice and success leading to mastery is the key.

The word *a* is introduced in **Stage Plus 4**. This is the first time that children will have read the word *a*. To avoid confusion, we recommend teaching children to pronounce it as /ā/ as in *apron*. This is to address a common problem encountered by beginning readers – the confusion of introducing the letter 'a' representing /a/ inside words but representing /u/ when it is a word in a sentence (*I can see a hat*).

From Stage Plus 4 on, the accompanying Heart word posters group words according to their phonemes. For example, *say, day, play, plays* and *cake* share the /ā/ phoneme and are grouped on the Plus 4 poster.

Stages 5 and 6 introduce interest words such as *firemen, birthday, elephant, love, happy* and *zoo*. They are words that are a little more complex and some children will need more reading practice to learn them.

By **Stage 7** the number of new Heart words reduces dramatically as children have already learnt many common high-frequency words. Some Stage 7 Heart words become decodable as children move through the Stage 7 focus, for example, *green* and *why*.

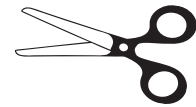


How to use these flashcards

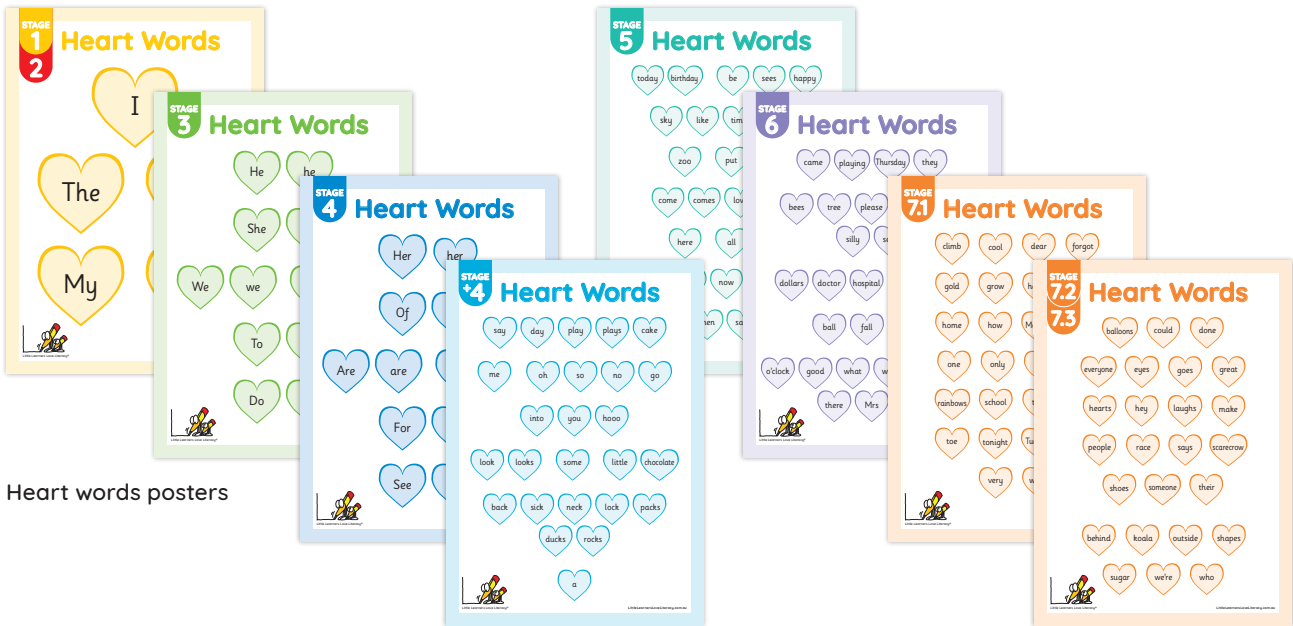
Even though children cannot decode our Heart words when they first appear in the books, it is still useful to break Heart words into sounds. At lower levels, sound out the word for children as you point to the graphemes. Where possible, identify the phoneme-grapheme correspondences that children already know and give them the ‘tricky part’. For example:

‘This word is “you”. There are two sounds in “you”: /y/ and /ōō/. We already know that the letter **y** represents the /y/ sound. Let’s say it together: /y/. The difficult bit is this (ou) – the letters **o** and **u** represent the /ōō/ sound in this word (two letters, one sound): /ōō/. Let’s say it together: /ōō/. The word is /yōō/, you. What’s the word? Can you tell your partner? Let’s practise reading and writing “you”.’

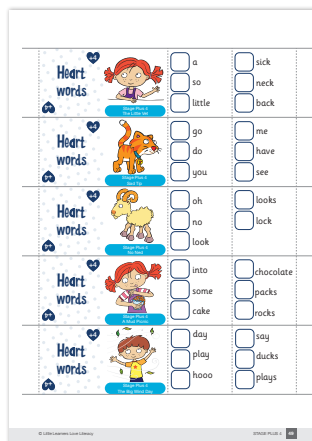
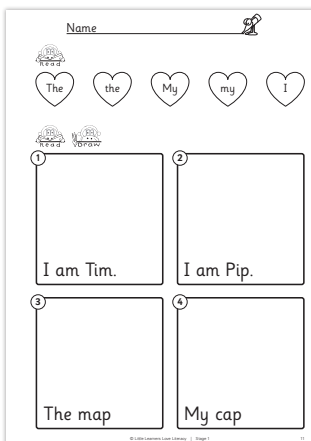
Use these flashcards before reading the books in your small group settings. You may also want to send them home alongside the decodable books for extra practice.



Other Heart word resources available



Heart words posters



Teacher Activity Resource book activities



Bingo Games

