A thousand read-alouds before school: how long it takes, and a free tracker

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How long a thousand read-alouds before school takes (about three a day for a year), why re-reads count, and a free tracker with a certificate at every hundred.

A thousand books read aloud before a child starts school sounds like a lot, and it is about three stories a day for a year, or one a day for three years. The same favourite read again counts every time, a storytime at the library counts, and so does the book a big sister reads at bedtime. Peabody now has a free tracker for it, A Thousand Read-Alouds: a dot for every story on ten shelves of a hundred, a certificate at every hundred, and a sheet of a hundred circles to print for the fridge. Like the rest of Peabody, it is free through the end of 2026, and nothing a family logs leaves their device.

Many public libraries run a challenge on the same idea under their own programme's name. This one is ours, for families whose library doesn't run one, or who'd rather tap than colour.

How long it really takes

- Stories a day: 1 · Time to a thousand: about 2 years and 9 months
- Stories a day: 2 · Time to a thousand: about 16 months
- Stories a day: 3 · Time to a thousand: about 11 months
- Stories a day: 5 · Time to a thousand: about 7 months

A baby who hears one story a day from their first birthday reaches a thousand before they turn four. Most families find they read more than they think once they start counting: the same board book four times before a nap is four.

Re-reads count, every time

The most common question about read-aloud challenges is whether the same book counts twice. Here it counts every time. Young children ask for the same book again because they are learning it: the rhythm, the words that come next, the page where the dog appears. Counting the re-read tells a grown-up that the tenth time is reading too.

That is also why the tracker is built around re-reads. After a story is logged, three buttons wait under it: Read it again, ×3 and ×10. Thirty readings of one favourite take three taps. A Ten books today button counts a library storytime or a day of picture books without naming each one.

How the tracker works

1. Pick an animal face for your child (never a name). Brothers and sisters each pick their own, up to six on one device.
2. Tap Someone read me a book and tap the book: one of Peabody's free read-aloud stories from the library, a book from a kids' list, or, after a grown-up's two-second hold, any book from home, typed by the grown-up.
3. Watch the dots fill. Every hundred lights the certificate: print it and put it on the wall.
4. Print the 100-circle sheet for the paper version. Ten sheets is a thousand.

Everything stays on the device. Peabody counts that a book was logged in this challenge, and never which book or which child.

What to read

Anything a child will sit for. A few things help:

- Board books with one line a page for babies; the same three, over and over, are fine.
- Picture books with a refrain for toddlers, so they can say the line with you.
- Peabody's own first stories at levels 0 to 2, read aloud with the words lighting up, for the child who wants to see the word as they hear it.
- A library card. The single best tool for a thousand books is a library that lends twenty at a time.

Questions parents ask

How many books a day is a thousand before school?

It depends on when you start. From birth, one a day reaches a thousand before age three. From age three, three a day reaches it in a little under a year.

Can I count audiobooks or videos?

Count what feels like reading together. A story read by a person, in the room or on a call, is the heart of it. An audiobook you listen to together, talking about the pictures in a book, is close. A video left playing is not the same thing.

What happens at a thousand?

The last shelf fills and the final certificate prints. Then start the 100 Books challenge, where a child's own reading takes over.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/a-thousand-read-alouds-before-school