Are magic kits worth it? What's already in the kitchen

Peabody blog · Games · updated 2026-10-30

What the eighty tricks in Peabody's Magic Shop actually need, counted from the shop's data, and seven questions a grown-up can ask of any magic kit before buying one.

A magic kit can be worth it, but a child doesn't need one to start: the eighty tricks in the Peabody Magic Shop are written for things most houses already have, and eight of them need nothing at all. Sixteen use a deck of cards, fifteen a coin and eleven a pencil. Paper and the kitchen cupboard cover most of the rest.

I'm not going to name a kit, a brand or a price here, and I'm not against kits. Some tricks need a gimmick, a secret prop made for one job, and a well-made one can do things a pencil can't. What I can do is tell you what the tricks in the Magic Shop actually use, counted from the shop's own data rather than by eye, and then give you the questions I'd ask of any box before buying it.

What the eighty tricks need

The shop's front page has a row of "what have you got?" buttons: tap what's on the table and it shows the tricks you can do. Each prop in the shop sits behind one of those buttons, or is something every house has anyway, like a napkin. Counting by button:

- What you've got: Nothing at all · Tricks that use it: 8 · Tricks that need only that: 8
- What you've got: Paper (sheets, strips, index cards, envelopes, a marker, paperclips) · Tricks that use it: 21 · Tricks that need only that: 8
- What you've got: A deck of cards · Tricks that use it: 16 · Tricks that need only that: 15
- What you've got: A coin · Tricks that use it: 15 · Tricks that need only that: 9
- What you've got: Kitchen things (water, salt, pepper, dish soap, a bowl, a spoon…) · Tricks that use it: 11 · Tricks that need only that: 3
- What you've got: A cup or glass · Tricks that use it: 11 · Tricks that need only that: 2
- What you've got: A pencil (or crayons) · Tricks that use it: 11 · Tricks that need only that: 5
- What you've got: String · Tricks that use it: 3 · Tricks that need only that: 3
- What you've got: A rubber band · Tricks that use it: 2 · Tricks that need only that: 2
- What you've got: A calculator, or a calculator app · Tricks that use it: 2 · Tricks that need only that: 2
- What you've got: Three dice · Tricks that use it: 1 · Tricks that need only that: 1

A trick that needs two of those, a glass and kitchen things say, counts in both rows of the middle column, so that column adds up to more than eighty.

A few props sit outside the buttons. Kid scissors appear in six tricks, and every cutting step says to ask a grown-up. A cloth napkin or handkerchief appears in three. Then there are four one-offs: an egg for the Obedient Egg, a balloon a grown-up blows up for the Balloon Static Wand, a chapter book of at least 110 pages for the Book Test, and a small UV torch for the Glowing Potion. That last one is the only thing in the shop most homes might not have, and the page says a grown-up holds it.

What a deck of cards gets you

If you buy one thing, a deck of cards is the best value in magic. Twelve tricks need nothing else. They run from the Magic Mind Reader, five minutes to learn and the first secret most card magicians learn, to the Card That Keeps Coming Back, a Wizard trick that takes three to six days. One trick, Do As I Do, needs two decks.

What nothing at all gets you

Eight tricks need no props: hands and a voice. The Answer Is Always 3 takes two minutes to learn, and Eleven Fingers takes three. The no-props page has all eight.

What a kit can add

To be fair to kits, here is what the shop can't do. Its tricks are all done with ordinary things, so some kinds of effect are out of reach: anything that depends on a specially printed deck, a box with a false bottom, or a prop built to do one thing. Those gimmicks are why kits exist, and a child who has worked through the household tricks and loves it might enjoy one very much.

A kit can also be a lovely present in a way a web page isn't. It has a lid. It sits on a shelf. A child can carry it to a friend's house.

Seven questions to ask of any kit

These are the questions the shop had to answer for itself, trick by trick, so they seemed fair to ask of a box.

1. Does each trick say how long it takes to learn? The shop splits tricks into ones that work the first try, ones that take ten to twenty minutes, and ones that take days. A child who knows a trick takes four days doesn't feel like a failure on day one.
2. Does each trick come with words to say? Patter is most of a trick. A trick without words is a thing that happens; a trick with words is a show.
3. Does each trick have an out? That is the line to say when it goes wrong. Every trick in the shop has one, and a child with an out is never stuck.
4. Are small parts marked, with an age? Coins, dice, paperclips, pom-poms and toothpicks carry a choking note in the shop for brothers and sisters under four. Look for the same on a box with little pieces in it.

5. Is anything hot, sharp or bright? In the shop, any step that needs something hot or a bright light is a grown-up's step, never a child's, and the shop's code checks it. Check the box for anything that would need the same rule.
6. Could you do half of it with the kitchen? If most of the tricks are a coin, a cup and a deck of cards, you may already own the kit.
7. Can your child read the instructions? A trick a child can't follow on their own becomes a trick a grown-up performs, which is a different present.

Questions grown-ups ask

Is a deck of cards enough to start?

It is enough for twelve tricks, from five minutes to several days. Add a coin and seven more need nothing else, from a two-minute prank to a real vanish. Pick me a trick asks "What's on the table in front of you?" as its second question, and hands over one trick for what you have.

What's the one thing my child might need to buy?

A small UV torch, and only for one trick, the Glowing Potion. Everything else in the shop is a household thing or a stationery-drawer thing. A calculator app counts for the two calculator tricks.

Would a kit teach more than a free site?

It depends on the kit, which is why the questions above are about teaching rather than tricks: time to learn, words to say, an out, safety and instructions a child can read. Magic School has seven short lessons on performing, from patter to the bow, and those apply to any trick from any box.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, and the Magic Shop needs no sign-up. What a child learns stays on their own device; the only thing sent is an anonymous count when a trick is marked as shown to somebody. The library is free too, and needs no box at all.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/are-magic-kits-worth-it