Best animal websites for kids: eleven checked for ads, sources and reading level

Peabody blog · Science · updated 2026-10-30

We opened eleven free animal websites for kids on 30 October 2026 and checked each cheetah page for ads, sign-up prompts, sources and reading level.

The calmest free animal websites for kids are the zoos' own and the nature clubs': San Diego Zoo Wildlife Explorers and Ranger Rick load no ads, and their words sit at an early-grades reading level. National Geographic Kids and the Smithsonian's National Zoo have no ads either but ask you to subscribe or shop, and read harder. The big fact sites carry ad networks. Almost none of them shows where a number came from.

I built Peabody's animal pages, so I'm not a neutral judge, and I'll say plainly where Peabody comes out. To keep it fair I measured every site the same way on the same day, 30 October 2026: I opened each one's cheetah page (Ranger Rick has no cheetah page, so its animal facts page), and looked at four things.

What I checked

- Ads. Which ad networks the page's code loads: Google's, Playwire, Raptive, Ezoic, Amazon's.
- Prompts. Whether the page asks a visitor to subscribe, sign up for a newsletter, shop, or leave a comment.
- Sources. Whether the page says where its facts came from.
- Reading level. The Flesch–Kincaid grade of the page's paragraphs, the same formula for every site. It's a rough guide: it counts long sentences and long words, not whether the ideas are clear.

What I found

- Site: Peabody (mine) · Ads found: none · Asks you to: nothing · Sources shown: every number, with its page and date · Reading grade: about 4 (Middle level)
- Site: San Diego Zoo Wildlife Explorers · Ads found: none · Asks you to: nothing · Sources shown: none · Reading grade: about 6
- Site: Ranger Rick (National Wildlife Federation) · Ads found: none · Asks you to: newsletter, shop · Sources shown: none · Reading grade: about 5
- Site: Kiddle · Ads found: Google AdSense · Asks you to: nothing · Sources shown: credits Wikipedia · Reading grade: about 5
- Site: National Geographic Kids · Ads found: none · Asks you to: subscribe, shop · Sources shown: none · Reading grade: about 8.5

- Site: Smithsonian's National Zoo · Ads found: none · Asks you to: membership, shop · Sources shown: none · Reading grade: about 11
- Site: Ducksters · Ads found: Playwire · Asks you to: nothing · Sources shown: a picture credit · Reading grade: about 6.5
- Site: Animal Fact Guide · Ads found: Google AdSense, Ezoic, Amazon · Asks you to: nothing · Sources shown: none · Reading grade: about 7.5
- Site: Science Kids · Ads found: Google AdSense · Asks you to: nothing · Sources shown: none · Reading grade: about 9.5
- Site: A-Z Animals · Ads found: Raptive and other exchanges · Asks you to: subscribe · Sources shown: a reference list dated November 2008 · Reading grade: about 15
- Site: Active Wild · Ads found: Raptive, Amazon · Asks you to: newsletter, comments · Sources shown: none · Reading grade: about 7.5

Two more I tried and couldn't judge: Britannica Kids answered with an error page, and DK Find Out now sends visitors to a different site.

The full ranking, with the rule spelled out, is the Top 10 of free animal websites.

What each one does well

San Diego Zoo Wildlife Explorers is short and clear, with filters by type of animal, by place and by how endangered it is. Ranger Rick reads easily and has games, crafts and a photo contest; its newsletter and shop links sit in the menus. National Geographic Kids has the best photos and a fact box with exactly the fields a report needs. The Smithsonian's National Zoo is the deepest page here, written by people who look after the animals, but it reads like a grown-up's page. Kiddle keeps its words simple, adapted from Wikipedia. Ducksters and Animal Fact Guide are easy to skim. A-Z Animals has thousands of animals, and Active Wild has many species and lists, with an open comment section.

Peabody has a hundred animals, not thousands, and no photos or video. What it does differently is draw every animal to scale beside a child, read every page aloud at three reading levels, and put a small mark on each number that opens where it came from. Where no page we trust gives a number, it says so instead of guessing.

Why the numbers disagree from site to site

Open the cheetah on four of these sites and you'll see four top speeds. That isn't always a mistake: one page gives the fastest ever measured, another a typical sprint, another rounds. The trouble is that a child can't tell which is which when no source is shown. It's the same reason I wrote where animal facts come from, and why the compare tool prints its sources under every pair.

How to choose one

- For a three- to six-year-old: a page with no ads and big pictures. San Diego Zoo Wildlife Explorers, or Peabody's Little level with .
- For a school report: a page that shows where its facts came from, so your child can say so in the report. Peabody's report page prints the numbers with their sources.
- For photos: National Geographic Kids, with a grown-up nearby for the shop links.
- For a deep dive with an older child: the Smithsonian's National Zoo.

Whatever you pick, open the page yourself first and scroll to the bottom. Ads, newsletter boxes and comment sections usually live there.

Questions grown-ups ask

Which animal websites for kids have no ads?

Of the eleven I opened on 30 October 2026, these loaded no ad networks: San Diego Zoo Wildlife Explorers, Ranger Rick, National Geographic Kids, the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Peabody. Several of those still ask you to subscribe, join or shop.

Are animal facts on kids' websites accurate?

Mostly, but the numbers vary, and few sites say where theirs came from. When a number matters, look for a site that names its source, and check two.

Is Peabody free?

Yes. Peabody is free through the end of 2026, with no ads and no sign-up on the animal pages. When the facts are done, the library has stories at your child's reading level.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/best-animal-websites-for-kids