Circle time ideas for preschool: a five-line script

Peabody blog · Teaching · updated 2026-10-30

A five-line circle time for preschool: hello, calendar, one theme question, the song, the book. How long for each age, and this week's theme filled in for you.

A circle time that works is five lines in the same order every day: a hello song that names each child, the calendar and the weather, one question about the theme, the week's song, and the week's book. Peabody Teach's free circle time page fills in the question, the song and the book for any of 52 themes and changes the lines for your room's ages. No sign-in, no ads, and Peabody is free through the end of 2026.

Circle time ideas usually come as a list of thirty games. Lists are fine for a rainy Thursday, but they don't help at 9:15 on a Monday when twelve children are on the rug. A script helps. You say the same five things in the same order, and the theme changes what goes inside them.

The five lines

1. Hello. "Good morning song, then say each name together."
2. Calendar. "Calendar: the day, the date and the weather."
3. The theme question. One open question you come back to all week.
4. The song. This week's song.
5. The book. The week's first book, with a child turning the pages.

That's it. Children who know what comes next can join in instead of waiting to find out, and by Wednesday someone will start the song before you do. Changing the theme each week keeps it fresh; keeping the order keeps it calm.

Three weeks, filled in

Here is what the page puts in lines 3 to 5 for three fall themes, straight from each theme's plan:

- Theme: Apples · Ask: "What do you think is inside an apple?" · Sing: Oranges and Lemons · Read: Meg and the Seed (level 3)
- Theme: Farm · Ask: "Which animals live on a farm, and what do they say?" · Sing: Old MacDonald Had a Farm · Read: At the Farm (level 3)
- Theme: Leaves · Ask: "Why do leaves fall off the trees?" · Sing: Pease Porridge Hot · Read: A Nest on the Hill (level 2)

The books are Peabody's own stories. A level from 0 to 3 is one a four-year-old can follow along with on Peabody's free stories while you read; a book above level 3 is marked "read aloud", for the grown-up to read. So Meg and the Seed is on the kid site, free, and a family can open it at home that night.

The songs are public-domain rhymes, so you may print the words on the family note. The songs post has more on that.

How long, by age

These are planning numbers, not targets. Watch the room, not the clock.

- Babies and young toddlers: two or three minutes, on laps.
- Twos: about five minutes. Stand up for the song.
- Threes and fours: ten to fifteen minutes. Let a child hold the book.

Pick the room's ages on the page (Infants and toddlers, Twos, Threes and fours, or Mixed ages) and the lines change to fit.

For infants and toddlers, the script gets simpler. The hello song names each child. The calendar becomes "Look out of the window together: sun, rain or clouds?" And in place of a question, you "Show the theme: hold up something real and name it." An apple in your hand says more to a one-year-old than any question.

When the wiggles win

Drop the calendar first. Keep the song and the book. The song gets everyone moving; the book settles them.

A few more habits many rooms use:

- Give a job. One child holds the book, one points at the weather picture, one starts the song.
- Stand up for the song and sit down for the book. Moving between the two is built in.
- Stop early. A short circle that ends well beats a long one that ends in tears.

The theme question, all week

The question is the line that changes most. On the wall plan from the theme planner, circle time runs across the week like this:

- Monday: ask the theme question.
- Tuesday: calendar and weather.
- Wednesday: "What did we learn so far?"
- Thursday: calendar and weather.
- Friday: "What was your favorite part?"

Monday's answers are guesses. Friday's answers are what the children actually did: counted seeds, rolled the apple, sang the song. Write a few of Friday's answers down and they become the "What we did" line in the newsletter.

Try this on Monday

1. Open the circle time page and pick this week's theme and your room's ages.
2. Read the five lines once. Put the book and the real thing (an apple, a leaf, a toy tractor) by your spot on the rug.
3. Learn the song tonight. The words are on the theme's page and the family note.
4. Tomorrow, say the five lines in order. Stop when the room tells you to.
5. On Friday, sing the song for the families at pickup.

If you want the whole week, not just circle time, the planner gives you circle time plus books, a craft, a song, a snack, a letter pack and outside time, and prints a plan for the wall and a family note for the door.

For a mixed-age room

In a family child care home with babies and fours together, keep one circle and change who does what. Everyone sings; the babies hear it. The fours answer the theme question and hold the book. The twos stand up for the song. The guide Circle time for twos, threes and fours and the mixed-age guide say more.

Three things providers ask

What should circle time include in preschool?

Five things in the same order: a hello song with each child's name, the calendar and the weather, one question about the week's theme, the week's song, and a book. Peabody's circle time page fills in the question, song and book for 52 themes.

How long should circle time be for two-year-olds?

Plan for about five minutes, standing up for the song. Babies and young toddlers do two or three minutes on laps; threes and fours, ten to fifteen. Watch the room, and stop early when it's restless.

Is the circle time page free?

Yes. It needs no sign-in and shows no ads, and Peabody is free through the end of 2026.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/circle-time-ideas-preschool