English phrases for kids learning English: the 10 to learn first

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The ten everyday English phrases a child learning English needs first at school, how to practise them at home, and free picture cards and quizzes read aloud.

A child starting at an English-speaking school needs ten phrases more than a hundred words: hello, my name is; I don't understand; can you say that again; can I go to the bathroom; I need help; can I play; how do you say this in English; thank you; where is; and I feel sick or tired. Practise them out loud at home before the first day, and the first week gets much easier. Peabody's English pages have picture cards and quizzes that read every word aloud, free through the end of 2026.

The ten phrases

1. "Hello, my name is ___." Then "What's your name?"
2. "I don't understand." The most useful sentence of all.
3. "Can you say that again, please?" Add "slowly, please".
4. "Can I go to the bathroom, please?"
5. "I need help."
6. "Can I play?"
7. "How do you say ___ in English?"
8. "Thank you" and "You're welcome."
9. "Where is the ___?"
10. "I'm hungry / tired / not feeling well."

Each has a line on why it matters in the ten everyday phrases list.

How to practise at home

- Say them in role-play. You're the teacher, your child is the student. Then swap.
- Play the quiz. What do you say? gives a situation and three things to say; Peabody reads each one aloud.
- Learn the words around them. The school, food and feelings picture cards cover the words children need first.
- Keep your home language strong. Keep talking, reading and singing at home in the language you know best; it gives your child more to bring to English, not less.

The first weeks

Children understand far more than they can say in the first months; many are quiet for a while, listening. That's normal. Tell your child it's fine not to understand everything, that lots of classmates are learning English too, and that "I don't understand" is always a good thing to say. The guide to the first weeks at an English-speaking school has more, and Peabody's easy readers read every word aloud for evening practice. The whole library is open to read together too.

Ten minutes a day at home

A routine that works for many families:

1. One topic of picture cards. School today, food tomorrow. Tap , say each word, find the real thing in the house.
2. One phrase. Practise it in a little role-play: "Can I play?" with a sibling, "I need help" with a parent.
3. One page of a reader. The easy readers read every word aloud, starting with single words and building to short sentences.
4. One quiz. The animal words quiz and the opposites quiz use pictures, so beginning readers can play.

Ten minutes, every day, out loud. Short, regular practice is easier to keep up than a long session once a week, and it fits around homework and dinner.

Questions grown-ups ask

I don't speak much English. Can I still help?

Yes. Read and talk with your child in your own language every day, and use the picture cards together: Peabody says each word, so you can both learn it.

Is there a page in Spanish?

Yes. The English hub has a page for Spanish-speaking families, linked at the foot of English for kids, and a page for families in English.

Does Peabody test my child's English level?

No. The cards and quizzes are for practice. Your child's school is the place to ask how they are doing.

My child is very quiet at school. Should I worry?

Many children learning a new language listen for weeks or months before they speak much. If you're worried, ask the teacher how your child is doing in class.