Free music for kids that's safe: no words, no ads, and songs from 1902 to 1930

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Peabody Radio is free music for kids with no words, no ads and no sign-up. How its band makes new tunes on the device, and why its old songs are free to play.

Peabody Radio is free music for children that a grown-up doesn't have to screen. None of the tunes has words, there are no ads between them, there is nothing to sign up for, and nothing plays until a child taps. Fourteen of its stations are made up on the spot by Peabody's own band, on your device. The fifteenth, Old Hits, plays real songs published between 1902 and 1930, which anyone in the United States may now play for free. This post explains how both work, and what to look for in any music you leave running for a child.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is a free learning site for children, free through the end of 2026, with stories in the library, games, and a Music section. The radio is at /music/radio.

What makes music "safe" for a child

When parents ask for safe music, they usually mean four things, and it helps to name them:

1. The words. Most worries about children's music are about lyrics. A tune with no words has nothing to worry about.
2. What plays next. Many music services choose the next song for you, and the next one after that. A child who starts on a nursery rhyme can end up somewhere you would not have picked.
3. Ads and buttons. An ad between songs is a door out of the music, and a "buy" button is a door to your card.
4. What is collected. A service that remembers what your child listens to is building a record of your child.

Peabody Radio answers all four by being simple. There are no words in any tune. A station only ever plays its own kind of music, so there is no list pulling a child along. There are no ads and nothing to buy. And because the music is made in the browser, nothing is downloaded and nothing about what your child taps is sent anywhere.

How the band makes new tunes

Each of the made-up stations is a style. Tap one and Peabody's band writes a tune in that style right there: a bass line, some chords, a beat and a melody. It plays each tune twice, then makes up another, and every tune gets a silly name of its own, so a child can tell a friend about the one they liked. No two are the same.

The stations, as of 31 October 2026:

- Station: Beep Boop Arcade · What it sounds like: Beeps and boops, like an old game console
- Station: Dash Beats · What it sounds like: Fast electro with a big beat
- Station: Going Up! · What it sounds like: Elevator music: soft, smooth and a little silly
- Station: Lo-fi Homework · What it sounds like: Slow beats for reading and homework
- Station: Jazz Café · What it sounds like: A little band that swings: bass, piano, vibes and a cymbal
- Station: Robot Disco · What it sounds like: Funky robots on the dance floor
- Station: Dance Party · What it sounds like: Bright and bouncy; Freeze Dance plays this one
- Station: Quest Music · What it sounds like: Adventure music for a hero on a journey
- Station: Beach Day · What it sounds like: Steel drums, a ukulele and sunshine
- Station: Tiny Marching Band · What it sounds like: Oom-pah, a parade in your room
- Station: Space Drift · What it sounds like: Slow and floaty, for drawing and dreaming
- Station: Spooky Tunes · What it sounds like: A creepy music box and owl hoots, not too scary
- Station: Calm Down Corner · What it sounds like: Very slow, very soft
- Station: Sleepy Time · What it sounds like: Music box and harp; it goes quiet by itself after 20 minutes

Sleepy Time stopping by itself is deliberate: music for falling asleep to should not play all night. Once a station is playing, a small player sits in the corner of every Peabody page, so the music goes on while a child reads, draws or builds. Pause it, skip to a new tune or turn it off. When a game starts, the game's own music takes over, and the music button (the note) turns off just the music while leaving the game's sounds on.

Old Hits: real songs that belong to everyone

Old Hits is different. It plays twenty real songs, from The Entertainer (1902) and Take Me Out to the Ball Game (1908) to Singin' in the Rain (1929) and I Got Rhythm (1930). Each one comes round played by a different band: a swing band, beep boops, elevator music, a marching band or a music box. A child hears the same tune five ways, which is a quiet lesson in how much an arrangement changes a song.

Why those songs are free

Every record has two things in it, and each has its own copyright. The song is the tune and the words as someone wrote them. The recording is one band playing it one day. To use an old record, both have to be free.

In the United States in 2026:

- Songs published in 1930 or earlier are in the public domain. On 1 January 2026, works from 1930 joined, I Got Rhythm among them. Songs from 1931 join on 1 January 2027, and one more year joins every 1 January after that.
- Recordings have a separate rule, a 100-year term for older records, so recordings made in 1925 or earlier are free now and 1926's join on 1 January 2027.

Old Hits stays clear of the second rule altogether. It never uses anyone's recording. Peabody's band plays each tune and its chords itself, written out from published transcriptions, so the only thing in it that someone else made is a song old enough to belong to everyone. It plays the tune, never the words. Other countries have different rules; in many, a song is free 70 years after its writer died. Public domain music has the whole explanation in plain words, and this is a summary, not legal advice.

Music for homework, calm and moving

The stations sort themselves into a few jobs:

- For homework and reading: Lo-fi Homework and Space Drift are slow and have no words to compete with the words on the page.
- For calming down: Calm Down Corner is the slowest and softest; Sleepy Time ends on its own.
- For moving: Dance Party and Dash Beats. Freeze Dance uses Dance Party, stops the music at a surprise moment and calls a shape to freeze in, and nobody is ever out.
- For fun: Robot Disco, Going Up! and Beep Boop Arcade, whose Make it mine button opens the tune that is playing in the Beep Boop Studio so a child can change it. Our post on making music with kids online covers the studio.

Free music for kids has every station on one page, with a tap to play each.

A few habits that help

- Let the child pick the station, not the song. Choosing "spooky" or "beach" is a real choice about mood, and it is a small thing to talk about: what makes this one sound spooky?
- Keep the volume low. Background music works best when a child has to lean in slightly to hear it.
- Use it as a cue. The same station at the same time of day, such as Lo-fi Homework when the books come out, becomes a signal for that time.
- Turn it off sometimes. Silence is fine too, and the music switch turns every station and every game's music off in one tap.

If a child starts asking about the music itself, listening maps and listening games are the next step.

Questions parents ask

Is Peabody Radio free?

Yes. Peabody is free for everyone through 31 December 2026, with no sign-up, no ads and no card.

Are there any words in the songs?

No. Every station plays tunes only, and Old Hits plays the melody of each old song without its words.

Does it need an account or collect anything?

No account is needed. The music is made in the browser, so nothing is downloaded, and nothing about what a child plays is sent anywhere.

Will it keep playing all night?

Most stations play until someone stops them. Sleepy Time goes quiet by itself after 20 minutes.

Is this real music or computer music?

Both, in a way. The made-up stations are new tunes written by code, played on Peabody's own synthesizer voices. The songs on Old Hits are real songs written more than 95 years ago, played by the same band. None of it is a recording.

Sources

- Duke Law School, Center for the Study of the Public Domain, Public Domain Day 2026: works from 1930, including I Got Rhythm, entered the US public domain on 1 January 2026; sound recordings from 1925 did, after a 100-year term. Read at cspd.law.duke.edu, 31 October 2026.
- Peabody's station list and Old Hits songs, as of 31 October 2026.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/free-safe-music-for-kids