Free stories for kids to read tonight, by reading level (Pre-K to 8th grade)

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Peabody's free library of short stories for kids, sorted by measured reading level from Pre-K to 8th grade, no account needed, and what each level looks like.

Peabody (peabody.kids) has a free library of short stories for kids, sorted by reading level from Pre-K to 8th grade. Every story was written for Peabody, measured in code to find the level it really reads at, and labelled with how spooky it is. Anyone can read them, with no account. When your child wants a story of their own, they can make one with AI at the same level, free through the end of 2026.

Below is every open story, floor by floor, with a note on what each level looks like on the page.

How the levels work

A story's level comes from its text, not its intentions. Code measures how long its sentences are and how many of its words are uncommon, using published readability formulas, and the story goes on the floor that matches. For the youngest readers it counts words per sentence and per page instead. Two stories once written as "6th grade" measured as 5th and moved down a floor.

Treat a level as a neighbourhood, not an address. Formulas wander by about a grade on a short story, and children don't read at a single exact level either. If a story feels hard, go down a floor; if it flies by, go up. Read more in what "reading level" really means.

Pre-K: first words

One sentence of two to five words a page, mostly words a child can sound out (hop, mud, big) and the first sight words, with a line that repeats ("Up goes a red one. Up goes a blue one."). Built for reading together: a grown-up points, the child joins in on the words they know.

- Ben and the Blocks
- Gus and the Big Rock
- Meg and the Seed

Kindergarten

One short sentence a page, six words or fewer, lots of sight words like the, and and see, and words a beginning reader can sound out.

- A Bath for the Birds
- A Boo for Bea

- Dot and the Log

1st grade

One or two short sentences a page, eight words or fewer each, with more sight words and longer words to sound out. Many children are reading these on their own by the end of the year, with a grown-up nearby.

- Pim and the Mitten
- The Bean in the Cup
- The Stuck Kite

2nd grade

The bridge to paragraphs: two or three short sentences a page, about 12 to 30 words. This is also the level where the stories Peabody writes for a child start carrying five vocabulary words each.

- Tadpoles in a Jar
- The Hen Parade
- The Tapping in the Fog (a little spooky)

3rd grade

Longer pages, about 40 to 65 words, with more description and a few harder words per page.

- The Otter's Rock

4th grade

About 55 to 85 words a page, with longer sentences and more complex plots.

- The Long Way Down
- Water Uphill

5th grade

About 70 to 100 words a page.

- A Hard Nut to Crack
- The Snow Fort Treaty
- The Wheel at Hollow Creek

6th grade

About 80 to 115 words a page.

- The Deep Field (a little spooky)

7th grade

About 90 to 130 words a page.

- The Shell Line
- The Well That Breathed

8th grade

About 100 to 145 words a page.

- The Bee Line

How to pick the right floor

A quick, low-pressure way to find a good starting point:

1. Start one floor below where you think your child is. An easy first story builds confidence, and it's how you'll hear what "comfortable" sounds like.
2. Listen to the first page. If they're stopping on more than a word or two in a page, or losing the thread, go down a floor.
3. If it's effortless and they're bored, go up. Comfortable reading with a few new words is the sweet spot for practice.
4. Let them reread. A story they've read before is a great one to read to someone.

Any child can read any floor. A big kid reading a Pre-K story to a little sibling is a lovely thing, not a step backwards.

Want a story at the same level, about anything?

Peabody also writes new stories with AI. Your child taps the sentence they can read, picks a few ideas (a robot chef, a castle in the clouds, a mysterious egg) and a mood, and the first three pages are ready in seconds, written and measured for their level. Each child can make up to three a day. See how to make a story with AI with your kid.

Questions parents ask

Are Peabody's library stories really free?

Yes. Every story on this page is free to read online with no account. Peabody as a whole is free through 31 December 2026.

Who writes the library stories?

They are Peabody's own stories, written for the library. They're not stories other children made: those are never put in the open library.

How do you decide a story's grade level?

Code measures the text: sentence length and the share of uncommon words for 2nd grade up, and words per sentence and per page for younger readers. A story's floor is the level it measures at, not the level it was written for.

Is this the same as a Lexile level?

No. Peabody doesn't measure Lexile or guided-reading levels. Its levels come from published readability formulas and are best read as a range.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/free-stories-by-reading-level