Graphic novels for kindergarten: what fits a five-year-old

Peabody blog · Reading · updated 2026-10-30

Most comic series start at six. Here is the one labelled for five, the six that work read together, and why a child reading the pictures is already reading.

Most comic series for children start at six or seven, not five. Of the series on Peabody's shelf, only one is labelled for five: Pizza and Taco, which its publisher lists for ages 5 to 8. Six more start at six, and a kindergartner meets those read together, a page at a time. Graphic novels for kindergarten sorts them into those two groups, with a checklist on each series.

We say this plainly because a lot of lists for "graphic novels for kindergarten" stretch the ages. They put a book labelled 8 and up next to a board book and call both right for five. A five-year-old can enjoy a lot of comics. It helps to know which ones they can try with a little help, and which ones work best on a grown-up's lap.

The one that starts at five

Pizza and Taco, by Stephen Shaskan, is about two best friends, a slice of pizza and a taco, who keep trying new things: a party, a contest, a sleepover. The panels are big. Each speech bubble holds a line or two. The books are split into short chapters, so a child can stop after one.

As of 30 October 2026 there are eleven books, from Who's the Best? (2020) to Scariest Sleepover Ever! (21 July 2026). The age is the publisher's: its listing for the newest book says ages 5 to 8, grades K to 3. They don't need to be read in order. Each book is its own story with the same two friends.

The series page notes for grown-ups that there is some bragging, a few spats and a made-up scare or two that always turns out fine.

The six that start at six

These are labelled for six, by a publisher or by us. A five-year-old can enjoy them with a grown-up reading the bubbles aloud and the child reading the pictures.

- Series: Narwhal and Jelly · What it is like: Very short comics, a line or two per panel · Ages, and whose: 6 to 9, our estimate
- Series: The Bad Guys · What it is like: Big pictures, few words, part comic and part chapter book · Ages, and whose: 6 to 10, our estimate
- Series: Captain Underpants · What it is like: Short chapters with lots of cartoons · Ages, and whose: 6 to 10, our estimate

- Series: Yotsuba&! · What it is like: Manga about everyday days, short bubbles · Ages, and whose: 6 to 12, our estimate
- Series: CatStronauts · What it is like: Cats on space missions, big clear panels · Ages, and whose: 6 to 10, Little, Brown
- Series: Magic Tree House graphic novels · What it is like: Picture-led retellings of the chapter books · Ages, and whose: 6 to 9, Penguin Random House

"Our estimate" means no publisher page we could open gave an age, so the range is Peabody's own. An age on a book is not a reading level. It is a guess at who will enjoy it.

For a five-year-old, Narwhal and Jelly is the gentlest of the six. Its comics are very short, a cheerful narwhal and a grumpy jellyfish, and some chapters end with sea-creature facts. The Bad Guys and Captain Underpants are longer and sillier, and they suit a child who already loves a chase. Yotsuba&! is manga, so it reads right to left; there is a guide for that.

Reading the pictures counts

A child who can't read the words can still read a comic. Most of the story is in the drawings. Who is in this box? What do they want? What went wrong? A five-year-old can answer all three without one word.

That is real reading. Following a story from picture to picture is the same skill a child will use later with sentences: keep track of who is who, notice what changed, guess what happens next. Our guide on how to read a comic with a child who can't read yet shows how to share one: start with the pictures, follow the panels left to right with a finger, and let the child tell you what is happening before you read the bubbles.

Some ways in:

- Let the child turn the pages. They set the pace.
- Read the bubbles in different voices. Pizza and Taco have very different ones.
- Ask, don't test. "What do you think he'll do?" works better than "What does that word say?"
- Stop at a chapter. Short chapters make a natural bedtime break.

When five turns six

Once a child turns six, the six-year-old list opens up. Comic series for 6-year-olds has every one we track for that age. Many children will still want Pizza and Taco for a while, and that's fine. Rereading a favourite is reading too.

My Shelf keeps the ticks for every series on your device, and prints them as one reading log. A kindergartner who likes crossing things off can colour in each box on the printout.

Questions grown-ups ask

Are graphic novels good for kindergarten?

They can be a good fit, because the pictures carry the story. A five-year-old can follow the plot long before they can read the bubbles. Most series are written for slightly older children, so expect to read the words aloud for now.

Which graphic novel series is for five-year-olds?

On Peabody's shelf, Pizza and Taco is the one labelled for five, by its publisher (ages 5 to 8). Narwhal and Jelly starts at six in our own estimate, but its comics are so short that many five-year-olds enjoy it.

My kindergartner just looks at the pictures. Is that reading?

Yes. Following a story through pictures is how reading starts. Ask what is happening in each panel, and read the words aloud when they want them.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026. Every series above has its books in order with a checklist kept on your device, and our library has stories for every reader, including the very first ones.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/graphic-novels-for-kindergarten