How long does it take a kid to learn a magic trick?

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Anywhere from one minute to six days. How long each of the three levels of magic trick takes a kid to learn, counted across all eighty tricks in the Peabody Magic Shop.

Between one minute and six days, and which end you land on depends almost entirely on whether the trick has a secret move in it. Most kids' tricks don't: of the eighty tricks in the Peabody Magic Shop, forty-four are learned in ten minutes or less. Twenty-nine more take ten to twenty minutes. Only seven take days, and every one of those is a real sleight of hand or a long routine.

Those numbers are not a guess. When I built the Magic Shop, I gave every trick a learning time, and the code refuses to put a trick up if its time and its level disagree. So the honest answer to "how long?" is printed on every trick, and it is the same answer whether a child or a grown-up is reading it.

The three levels

- Level: Apprentice · What it means: Works by itself, or one simple move. It works the first try. · Tricks: 44 · Learning time: 1 to 10 minutes · The page: Easy
- Level: Conjurer · What it means: A bit of setting up, or ten to twenty minutes of practice. · Tricks: 29 · Learning time: 10 to 20 minutes · The page: Medium
- Level: Wizard · What it means: A real secret move, or a longer routine. Practise over days. · Tricks: 7 · Learning time: 2 to 6 days · The page: Hard

The rules behind that table are checked every time the shop is built. An Apprentice trick must be learned in ten minutes or less. Only a Wizard trick may be measured in days, and every Wizard trick must say how many.

Apprentice: minutes, and most of them five

Of the forty-four Apprentice tricks, two take a minute, seven take two, seven take three, twenty-five take five and three take ten. Five minutes is the typical answer.

The quickest are the Rubber Pencil and the Hole in Your Hand, one minute each. The longest is Secret Message Ink at ten, and its page carries the note that something has to dry.

"Works the first try" is the promise at this level. A child can learn one after dinner and perform it before bed.

Conjurer: ten to twenty minutes

Ten Conjurer tricks take ten minutes, seventeen take fifteen, and two take twenty: the Instant Magic Square and the Flying Coin. The quickest is the Haunted Rubber Band.

What the time buys is either setting up — a card placed in the deck before the show, a strip of paper folded the right way — or a few rehearsals, usually in a mirror. Nothing at this level needs a move that takes days. It is the level where a trick turns into a routine, with a start, a middle and a finish, and where what the child says matters as much as what their hands do.

Wizard: days, and here they all are

- Trick: The Coin From Behind Your Ear · Level: Wizard · Ages: 8 to 13 · Learn it in: 2 to 4 days
- Trick: The Torn and Restored Napkin · Level: Wizard · Ages: 8 to 13 · Learn it in: 2 to 4 days
- Trick: The Cut and Restored String · Level: Wizard · Ages: 8 to 13 · Learn it in: 2 to 4 days
- Trick: Easy Cups and Balls · Level: Wizard · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 3 to 5 days
- Trick: The Vanishing Coin · Level: Wizard · Ages: 8 to 13 · Learn it in: 3 to 5 days
- Trick: The Two-Coin Jump · Level: Wizard · Ages: 10 to 13 · Learn it in: 3 to 5 days
- Trick: The Card That Keeps Coming Back · Level: Wizard · Ages: 10 to 13 · Learn it in: 3 to 6 days

The ages come from the grades each trick is written for: the youngest grade plus five, to the oldest grade plus six.

A "day" here means a few minutes of practice every evening, not an afternoon. The secret move has to be done without looking, and the only way there is repetition spread out over several days. The Vanishing Coin is the clearest example: it is the first real sleight most magicians learn, and three to five days is what it takes for the hands to stop giving it away.

The order the shop suggests for practising a Wizard trick is the one I would suggest for anything: a mirror first, then a pet or a stuffed animal, then one person who loves you, then everybody.

What actually makes a trick take longer

Reading across all eighty, three things seem to decide it:

1. A secret move. This is nearly the whole difference. Tricks where the method is maths, science or a set-up deck are fast. Tricks where a hand has to hide something are slow.
2. Words. A routine with patter takes longer than a trick that is over in one sentence, because the words have to come out without thinking.
3. Set-up. A Conjurer card trick may need the deck arranged before the show. Learning the

arrangement is part of the time.

Age decides less than you might think. The shop gives each trick one learning time, whoever is learning it. What age changes is which tricks are on offer: no Wizard trick starts below 2nd grade, and most start at 3rd or later.

When you don't know which to pick

Pick me a trick asks exactly this. Flick, the rabbit who runs the shop, asks how long you have got — "right now", "ten minutes" or "a few days" — alongside three other questions, and they hand over one trick that fits. Answer "a few days" and Flick deliberately reaches for the hardest trick that fits. There is also a quiz, How long will it take?, that turns the three levels into a game.

Questions grown-ups ask

How long should a child practise a magic trick before performing it?

For an Apprentice trick, the few minutes on its page are usually enough. For a Wizard trick, the number of days on its page, a few minutes each evening. The Magician's Code puts it in a child's words: practise until it is boring for you, because that is when it becomes amazing for them.

My child gave up on a hard trick. Should I push?

I wouldn't. Seven tricks in the whole shop take days, and sixty-three don't. A child who has performed three or four easy tricks for an audience comes back to the hard ones on their own, with a reason to bother.

Does learning get faster with each trick?

Often, because tricks share ideas: the secret of the Magic Mind Reader turns up again, in a new costume, in the Crystal Ball Prediction and Do As I Do. Every trick page ends with two more to try next, so one trick leads to another.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, the Magic Shop needs no sign-up. What a child learns stays on their own device; the only thing sent is an anonymous count when a trick is marked as shown to somebody. Between practice sessions, the library is next door.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/how-long-does-it-take-to-learn-a-magic-trick