How to put on a magic show at home, step by step

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How a child puts on a magic show at home: a stage name, four to six tricks in a running order, a show kit, a poster for the door and a bow. With four ready-made shows.

A magic show at home is four to six tricks and ten to fifteen minutes, in a running order magicians have used for a very long time: a quick opener, a hello, a helper trick, a trick for everyone, a big visual one, your best trick last, and a bow. Add a stage name, a table with the props laid out in order and a poster on the door, and a child has a show. Here is how to put one together, step by step, with the tools in the Peabody Magic Shop that do the fiddly parts.

The usual mistake in a first show is doing too much: one more trick, then another, until the audience is clapping out of politeness. So when I built the Magic Shop this week, the show page says it first: the hardest skill in magic is stopping while the room still wants more.

Step 1: pick a magician name

Magic School's first lesson is a stage name, because a name tells the audience what sort of magic is coming before anything happens. The name picker asks three three-box questions, a big word, a magic thing and a title, and makes names like "The Amazing Comet, Keeper of Secrets". There are 27 in all, and the chosen one is kept on the device. Then pick one catchphrase and say it at every magic moment. Flick, the rabbit who runs the shop, says "Presto!", and "Presto… ish" when it doesn't work.

Step 2: choose four to six tricks

There are two ways to do this. The quick one is to take a show off the shelf. The shop has four ready-made shows, and every trick in them is on a shelf in the shop:

- Show: The Kitchen Wizard · Ages: 5 to 7 · About: 8 minutes · Tricks: 5
- Show: The Mind Reader · Ages: 8 to 10 · About: 12 minutes · Tricks: 6
- Show: The Grand Illusionist · Ages: 10 to 12 · About: 15 minutes · Tricks: 5
- Show: The Spooky Show · Ages: 7 to 11 · About: 12 minutes · Tricks: 5

The Kitchen Wizard is the one I would start with for a younger child, because nothing in it takes more than five minutes to learn:

- Trick: The Rubber Pencil · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 1 minute
- Trick: Thumb Off · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 8 · Learn it in: 5 minutes
- Trick: The Arrow Flip · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 2 minutes
- Trick: Pepper Scatter · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 2 minutes

- Trick: The Water Vanish · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 10 · Learn it in: 2 minutes

The other way is the show builder on the magic show page. Your child ticks the tricks they can really do, four to six of them, and Flick puts them in an order that works, reading each trick's own record: something quick and visual with no helper opens, a card trick or a trick that names a helper goes in the helper slot, a mind-reading trick the room can join in goes in the middle, and the strongest closes. It keeps no more than six, because a show that runs long is the one mistake a first show makes.

If your child doesn't know any tricks yet, Pick me a trick asks four three-box questions and hands over one; "A whole room" is an answer to the last question.

Step 3: learn the running order

The show page's running order has seven parts, two of which are words rather than tricks:

1. Opener, 30 seconds. Quick, visual, no helper: something that happens before they've settled.
2. Hello, 30 seconds. Your magician name and your catchphrase. No trick.
3. Helper trick, 2 minutes. Bring someone up. A card trick is perfect here.
4. Everyone trick, 2 minutes. Something the whole room does at once, in their heads or their hands.
5. Wow trick, 2 minutes. The most visual thing you've got. People at the back must see it.
6. Closer, 3 minutes. Your strongest, and the one you've practised most.
7. Bow and goodbye, 20 seconds. Magic word, one second of silence, bow, "Thank you!" Then stop.

That adds up to a little over ten minutes. The printables have a running-order card to fill in and keep on the table, because every magician forgets the order once.

Step 4: practise, then rehearse

Magic School's practice lesson has the test: ready means ten times in a row without looking at your hands. Its order is a mirror first, then a stuffed animal, then one person who loves you, then everybody.

Then run the whole show twice, in order, with the props laid out the way they will be on the night. The show page's point is a good one: most of what goes wrong in a magic show is not a trick failing, it is a prop in the wrong pocket.

Step 5: pack the show kit

The shop's checklist, which the printables have as a tick-list:

- A table with a cloth on it
- Your props set out in the order you need them

- A shoebox to hide the props you haven't used yet
- One spare trick you know cold, in your pocket
- A wand (a pencil wrapped in black and white tape counts)
- Water to drink
- A grown-up to turn the lights down, if a trick needs the dark

Put the audience on chairs or the sofa, all on one side. Many tricks only work from the front, so nobody sits beside the magician or behind them.

Step 6: make the poster

The show poster makes it an occasion. Pick one of the ready shows, or "Use the show I built" if your child made one in the show builder on the same device, and the poster fills in the running order. If a magician name was picked on that device, it goes on the "starring" line. There are blanks for the date, the time and where. The page suggests sticking it on the door an hour before you start.

Step 7: the show itself

The show page has an opening line to read out, with a blank for the magician's name, and a closing line to finish on. In between, two lessons from Magic School matter most.

When something goes wrong. Every trick page has an "If something goes wrong" line. The outs lesson gives three in order: finish anyway, laugh, or move straight on to the next trick and never explain. What a magician must never do is apologise twice.

The bow. Say the magic word, hold still for one second so the picture lands, bow, say "Thank you!" and go. Don't do one more trick, and don't explain the first one.

There is more in the first magic show guide, including how to set up the room.

Questions grown-ups ask

How long should a child's magic show be?

Ten to fifteen minutes, four to six tricks. The ready-made shows run from about 8 to about 15 minutes. A first show can be shorter still: opener, helper trick, wow trick and closer, with a hello and a bow.

What should a grown-up do during the show?

Be the audience, mostly. The checklist asks for a grown-up to turn the lights down if a trick needs the dark, and some tricks have a step that is a grown-up's, which the trick page marks.

What if my child wants to do it again straight away?

The Magician's Code asks for "I will not do the same trick twice for the same people", because the second time, they know where to look. A new audience next weekend is the better encore, and the poster can go up again.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, and the Magic Shop needs no sign-up. After the bow, the library has a bedtime story waiting.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/how-to-put-on-a-magic-show-at-home