Magic tricks for 6 year olds: the 12 that work the first try

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Twelve easy magic tricks for 6 year olds that work the first try, with the ages each one fits, how long it takes to learn and what you need from the kitchen drawer.

The best magic tricks for a six-year-old are the ones that work by themselves, or with one simple move, so the very first performance is a success. Here are twelve of them, each learned in five minutes or less with a pencil, a coin, a deck of cards or a bowl of water — and all twelve work the first try.

That promise is not a figure of speech. In the Peabody Magic Shop, which I built for my own kids and anyone else's, every trick carries one of three levels, and the easiest, Apprentice, means "works by itself, or one simple move". The code checks it: an Apprentice trick has to be learned in ten minutes or less, and it has to start at 2nd grade or below, or the shop refuses to show it.

Why six is a good age to start

Six is the point where a child can follow four or five steps in order on their own, which is exactly what a first real trick asks for. The shop's page for 6-year-olds has forty-three tricks on it — more than twice as many as the page for five-year-olds — and thirty-seven of those are Apprentice tricks.

That is too many to choose from on a Tuesday evening, so these are the twelve I would start with: the quickest of the ones that fit a first grader, leaving out anything with a grown-up step.

The twelve

- Trick: The Rubber Pencil · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 1 minute · You need: A pencil
- Trick: The Hole in Your Hand · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 1 minute · You need: A sheet of paper
- Trick: The Forehead Coin · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 10 · Learn it in: 2 minutes · You need: A coin
- Trick: The Answer Is Always 3 · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 6 to 11 · Learn it in: 2 minutes · You need: Nothing
- Trick: Pepper Scatter · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 2 minutes · You need: Bowl, water, pepper, dish soap
- Trick: The Water Vanish · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 10 · Learn it in: 2 minutes · You need: Glass, water, coin, saucer

- Trick: Eleven Fingers · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 3 minutes · You need: Nothing
- Trick: The Crystal Ball Prediction · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 10 · Learn it in: 3 minutes · You need: Cards, paper, a marker
- Trick: The X-Ray Dice · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 10 · Learn it in: 3 minutes · You need: Three dice
- Trick: The Magic Mind Reader · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 11 · Learn it in: 5 minutes · You need: A deck of cards
- Trick: The Knuckle Calendar · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 6 to 10 · Learn it in: 5 minutes · You need: Nothing
- Trick: The Instant Knot · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 6 to 11 · Learn it in: 5 minutes · You need: A piece of string

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

Three to try tonight

The Rubber Pencil is the one to learn first, because it takes a minute and gets a gasp every time. You hold an ordinary pencil, say the magic word, and it wobbles and bends like rubber. Then you hand it straight over and it is solid wood. The secret is about your eyes rather than your hands, which is why a six-year-old can do it as well as anybody.

Eleven Fingers needs nothing at all. You announce that you have eleven fingers, your audience counts ten, and then you count them out loud, slowly, and really do get eleven. It is a counting muddle dressed up as a miracle, and six-year-olds find it hilarious to do to a grown-up.

The Magic Mind Reader is the first real card trick. Somebody takes any card, buries it in the deck and cuts the cards themselves, and you deal through and pull out their card. It is five minutes to learn, and it is the trick that makes a child feel like a magician rather than somebody doing a trick.

What these twelve have in common

None of them asks for fast fingers. The shop's levels are a promise about time, and Apprentice tricks either work by themselves — Pepper Scatter is surface tension, the Water Vanish is light bending in water — or they need one simple move that is learned in a few tries.

Most of them also give the child something to say. Every trick page has the magic words, and at six the most useful thing to practise is not the trick at all: it is saying the magic word loudly, then holding still for a second so everybody sees what happened.

Coins, dice and little brothers

Three of the twelve use coins or dice, and every page that does carries a choking note for brothers and sisters under 4. The note is not typed by hand: it comes from the props a trick uses, so no coin page can forget it. If there is a toddler in the house, the Rubber Pencil, Eleven Fingers and the Knuckle Calendar are the safe three to start with.

Pepper Scatter and the Water Vanish happen in a bowl and a glass of water on the kitchen table, and Pepper Scatter is marked as a bit messy, so put a cloth down. Nothing on this list involves anything hot, sharp or for drinking.

If none of these fits

Pick me a trick is the quickest way in. Flick, the rabbit who runs the shop, asks four questions — how old you are, what is on the table, how long you have got and who is going to watch — each answered with one of three boxes, and they hand over one trick with the reason. Tap "nothing at all" on the table question and every trick it can hand over needs only your hands.

Questions grown-ups ask

Can a six-year-old really learn a magic trick on their own?

The Apprentice tricks are written for exactly that: a trick for a first grader has no more than twelve steps, each one a short sentence, read aloud by Flick and shown in a little moving picture. I would read the first one together, then let them do the second alone.

Which trick should my child perform first?

The Rubber Pencil. It takes a minute to learn, needs one pencil, and the audience gets to hold the pencil afterwards and check it, which is the best part of the trick for everybody.

Is it all right to tell a six-year-old the secret?

Every trick page has the secret, behind a tap, because the child is the magician. The shop also teaches the Magician's Code: practise before you perform, and keep the secret afterwards. Six-year-olds love being in on a secret, which makes this a very good age to start.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, and the Magic Shop needs no sign-up at all. 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. When the show is over, the library is next door.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/magic-tricks-for-6-year-olds