Magic tricks for a school talent show: ten that work on a stage

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Ten magic tricks a child can do at a school talent show, big enough to see from the back of a hall, plus how to build a short act and get through the nerves.

The best magic tricks for a school talent show are big, quick ones the back row can see: a coin that vanishes, a pencil that turns to rubber, a hole through your hand, a whole person stepping through a sheet of paper. Here are ten from the Peabody Magic Shop that pass the talent-show rule, and how to turn three of them into an act.

A talent show is a different room from the kitchen table. The audience is far away, the lights are bright, there may be no table to put things on, and there is one go. A card trick that fools your grandmother from a foot away is invisible from row twelve. So every trick below is chosen by rule, the same rule as the shop's talent-show page: something floats, vanishes, appears, changes, passes through something or is mended, it is done standing up, it needs no dark room and no grown-up step, and it is Conjurer level or easier, so it can be ready in a week.

The ten, ranked for a stage

- #: 1 · Trick: The Hole in Your Hand · What happens: Passes through · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 1 minute
- #: 2 · Trick: The Rubber Pencil · What happens: Changes · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 1 minute
- #: 3 · Trick: The Arrow Flip · What happens: Changes · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 2 minutes
- #: 4 · Trick: The Water Vanish · What happens: Vanishes · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 10 · Learn it in: 2 minutes
- #: 5 · Trick: Thumb Off · What happens: Mended · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 8 · Learn it in: 5 minutes
- #: 6 · Trick: The Coin Fold · What happens: Vanishes · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 15 minutes
- #: 7 · Trick: Walk Through a Paper · What happens: Passes through · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 15 minutes
- #: 8 · Trick: The Forehead Coin · What happens: Vanishes · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 10 · Learn it in: 2 minutes
- #: 9 · Trick: The Instant Knot · What happens: Appears · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 6 to 11 · Learn it in: 5 minutes

- #: 10 · Trick: The Escape Loops · What happens: Passes through · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 15 minutes

The first seven are in one of the shop's ready-made shows, which is why they come first: they already have an order and words that work in front of people. The last three need a helper from the audience, and a helper walking up to the stage gives the whole hall something to watch. The same ten, with the rule written out, are on the Top 10 magic tricks for a talent show.

What makes a trick work on a stage

Size. The thing that happens has to be big. A whole sheet of paper with a child stepping through it is perfect. A small coin is fine only if the moment is big: The Water Vanish works because the whole glass is the prop, and the audience watches the glass.

Speed. Most school talent shows give each act a short slot, so ask the organiser how long you have. Three tricks of a minute or two each, with words, fill a short slot nicely and leave the audience wanting more, which is the best way to leave a stage.

No table. Many stages have nothing to put things on. None of these needs your child sitting at a table; the two with a glass of water need only a stool or a chair to stand the glass on, so ask for one. Keep the other props in a pocket or a small bag, in the order you need them.

Words, loud and slow. A talent show is noisy and the words carry the trick. Every trick page has a line to say, and Rehearse with Flick lets your child pick a funny, mysterious or sciencey line for each trick and print the act as a script.

Building the act: three tricks, not ten

The show builder puts tricks in the order magicians use: something quick to open, something that makes the room go quiet in the middle, and the strongest last. For a talent show, that might be:

- Open with The Rubber Pencil. It takes seconds, it gets a laugh, and it tells the audience who your child is before anybody has settled.
- Middle: The Coin Fold or The Escape Loops. The Escape Loops brings a helper up and ties the two of them together with loose loops of string on their wrists; the hall watches them climb over and under, stuck, until your child slips free without untying a knot. Loose knots, always.
- Close with Walk Through a Paper. Your child makes a few cuts in an index card or a sheet of paper, opens it into an enormous ring and steps right through it. It is the biggest finish in the shop for a stage, and the audience can see it from anywhere. The scissors are kid scissors, and cutting is a grown-up's job for the youngest.

Practise the whole act out loud five times, then do it once for the family with the lights on,

standing where an audience would see it. The guide on how to practise a trick and how to rehearse a show explains the difference: practice is for the hands, rehearsal is for the act.

Nerves

Almost every child is nervous before a stage, and so is almost every magician. The guide to stage fright and your first trick has the shop's whole answer, but three things help most: start with the trick that cannot go wrong, look at one friendly face, and know your out. Every trick page has an out, the line to say if something goes wrong, so a slip turns into a joke instead of a stop. The Magician's Code helps too: a helper is never the joke, and if something goes wrong, it was your fault, out loud, with a smile.

Questions grown-ups ask

What age can do a magic act at a talent show?

All ten fit ages 7 and 8, and six of them start at five. The three Conjurer tricks start at seven and take about fifteen minutes to learn. A five-year-old can do a lovely act from the Apprentice tricks alone: the rubber pencil, the hole in your hand and the water vanish.

What does my child need to buy?

Nothing. Between them the ten use a wooden pencil, a coin, a clear glass or plastic cup of water, a saucer, paper, a marker, string and kid scissors. Check with the school before taking water or scissors on a stage, and keep the coin away from very little ones in the audience.

Should my child explain the trick afterwards?

No. The Magician's Code says to keep the secret. Your child can say it is a trick, that it is a performance like juggling, and smile.

What if it goes wrong on the night?

Then your child uses the out on that trick's page and carries on. Audiences at school shows are kind, and a child who handles a slip with a grin often gets the biggest clap of the night.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, and the Magic Shop needs no sign-up. What a child learns stays on their own device; nothing they tap is typed or sent. On the nights the practice is done early, the library has a story to read together.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/magic-tricks-for-a-talent-show