Magic tricks with hands only: the ones you can do with nothing

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People search for seven magic tricks with hands only. Our Magic Shop has eight that need nothing at all; here they are, with ages and how long each takes to learn.

There are eight magic tricks in the Peabody Magic Shop that you can do with your hands only, no coin, no card and no pencil: five are done on your own fingers, two are done with nothing but your voice, and one needs a partner. People search for "seven magic tricks with hands only", and I would love to tell you we have seven. We have eight, so that is the number you get.

I built the Magic Shop so my kids could learn real tricks with things already in the house. It has eighty tricks on six shelves, and when the shop filters for the ones whose list of things you need is empty, it finds eight. The no-props page shows the same eight, kept up to date by the shop itself.

The eight hands-only tricks

- Trick: The Answer Is Always 3 · What does the work: Your voice · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 6 to 11 · Learn it in: 2 minutes
- Trick: The Stretching Finger · What does the work: Your fingers · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 3 minutes
- Trick: Eleven Fingers · What does the work: Your fingers · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 3 minutes
- Trick: The Grey Elephant Prediction · What does the work: Your voice · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 3 minutes
- Trick: Thumb Off · What does the work: Your fingers · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 8 · Learn it in: 5 minutes
- Trick: The Nine Times Fingers · What does the work: Your fingers · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 7 to 11 · Learn it in: 5 minutes
- Trick: The Knuckle Calendar · What does the work: Your fingers · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 6 to 10 · Learn it in: 5 minutes
- Trick: The Secret Partner Code · What does the work: A partner · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 15 minutes

Seven are Apprentice tricks, the shop's easiest level, which means they work the first try. One is a Conjurer trick, the middle level, because it takes a quarter of an hour to agree a code with your partner. The ages come from the grades each trick is written for.

The five done on your fingers

These are the true "hands only" tricks: the secret lives in how you hold your fingers, and nothing else.

Thumb Off is the one many grown-ups remember from their own childhood. You take hold of your own thumb, pull, and the top half slides off; a second later it goes back on and you wiggle everything. The secret is two bent thumbs pressed together, with a pointer finger hiding the join. It suits the youngest children in the shop, ages 5 to 8, and it is the trick the Magic School path uses for its lesson on practice, because it looks best when it has been done in a mirror until it is boring.

The Stretching Finger is its cousin. You grab the tip of a pointer finger and pull, and it slowly grows longer, then gets pushed back to size. The finger was bent inside your fist to begin with. Both of these carry the shop's "only from the front" note, so the audience needs to be in front of you, not beside you.

Eleven Fingers looks like a finger trick and is really a counting trick. You claim eleven fingers, they count ten, and then you count out loud and get eleven, because you counted one hand backwards from ten. It works from any side, which makes it the best choice for a child who worries about being caught.

The Nine Times Fingers and the Knuckle Calendar use your hands as a tool rather than a show. Somebody calls out a number from 1 to 10 and you give nine times it straight away, by folding down one finger and reading the tens and ones on either side. Somebody names a month and you tell them how many days it has by counting along your knuckles and the dips between them, February included. Both live in the Mind Reader's Corner, and both are things a child can still use in a maths lesson years later.

The two done with your voice

The Answer Is Always 3 needs no hands at all. Somebody thinks of any number, follows a few sums in their head, and you tell them they are looking at 3. The steps cancel their number out, so everybody lands in the same place. It is the one I would teach first to any child who can add in their head.

The Grey Elephant Prediction starts with sums that always land on 4, turns that into the letter D, and then lets your audience think of a country, an animal and a colour. Almost everybody goes to Denmark, an elephant and grey. Its page is honest that the second half is not maths, and it gives the line to say when somebody picks a dog.

The one that needs a partner

The Secret Partner Code has nothing to hold, but it does need a second person and a room to leave. Your partner asks everybody to point at any object; you come back and put your hand straight on it. Your partner's questions carry a code nobody else hears. It is the only Conjurer trick of the eight, and a lovely one for two siblings to work out together.

What is not on the list

A few tricks feel like hands-only tricks but are not, and the shop counts them honestly. The Rubber Pencil needs a pencil, though it takes one minute to learn. The Hole in Your Hand needs one sheet of paper rolled into a tube. If a pencil and a sheet of paper count as nothing where you are, the easy tricks page has forty-one Apprentice tricks to choose from.

The quickest way to find one is Pick me a trick. Flick, the rabbit who runs the shop, asks four questions with three boxes each, and "Nothing at all", just your hands, is one of the answers to what is on the table in front of you. They will hand over a trick that fits.

Questions grown-ups ask

How many magic tricks can you do with hands only?

In our shop, eight out of eighty. Lists of "seven" are common in searches, but the number that matters is how many your child can do well, and one done slowly and confidently beats seven rushed.

Which hands-only trick is best for a five-year-old?

Thumb Off, the Stretching Finger or Eleven Fingers. All three fit from age five and take three to five minutes to learn. The voice tricks start at six and seven, because a child has to be able to follow the sums.

Is there anything to watch out for?

Very little, which is the point of these. None of the eight uses anything small enough to need the shop's choking note, and none has a step for a grown-up. The only thing to teach is the angle: the finger tricks are for an audience in front of you.

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; the only thing sent is an anonymous count when a trick is marked as shown to somebody. For the quiet stretch afterwards, the library has stories to read aloud.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/magic-tricks-with-hands-only