Paper magic tricks for kids: tear, fold, walk through

Peabody blog · Games · updated 2026-10-30

Twenty paper magic tricks for kids, from a one-minute hole in your hand to a card you walk through, with learning times and where scissors need a grown-up.

Twenty of the eighty tricks in the Peabody Magic Shop use paper, and in eight of them the paper is the trick: it gets rolled, folded, torn, twisted, cut or turned upside down under a glass of water until it does something impossible. The quickest takes one minute. The showiest, a card small enough to cover your hand that you then step through, takes fifteen. In the other nine, paper is where you write a prediction, draw a clock or hide a message.

Paper is the most forgiving prop there is. It costs nothing, a ruined one goes in the recycling, and a child can practise the same trick ten times in an afternoon with ten sheets. I built the Magic Shop this week around things already in the house, and paper turned up on more shelves than I expected: the Paper and String Drawer, of course, but also the Coin Counter, the Potion Lab, the Card Cabinet and the Mind Reader's Corner.

All twenty

- Trick: The Hole in Your Hand · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 1 minute · What the paper does: Rolled into a tube
- Trick: The Linking Paper Clips · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 10 · Learn it in: 2 minutes · What the paper does: Folded into an S
- Trick: The Arrow Flip · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 2 minutes · What the paper does: Drawn on
- Trick: The Crystal Ball Prediction · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 10 · Learn it in: 3 minutes · What the paper does: Written on
- Trick: The Impossible Hole · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 6 to 11 · Learn it in: 5 minutes · What the paper does: Folded across a hole
- Trick: The Magic Number 1089 · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 5 minutes · What the paper does: Written on and sealed
- Trick: The Upside-Down Water Card · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 6 to 11 · Learn it in: 5 minutes · What the paper does: Holds up a glass of water
- Trick: The Balloon Static Wand · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 10 · Learn it in: 5 minutes · What the paper does: Torn into pieces
- Trick: The Secret Number Cards · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 10 minutes · What the paper does: Six cards
- Trick: Secret Message Ink · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 10 · Learn it in: 10 minutes ·

What the paper does: Hides a message
• Trick: The Magic Clock · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 10 minutes · What the paper does: Drawn on
• Trick: Race to 100 · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 10 minutes · What the paper does: Keeps the score
• Trick: The Coin Fold · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 15 minutes · What the paper does: Folded, then torn
• Trick: The Lightning Calendar · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 8 to 13 · Learn it in: 15 minutes · What the paper does: Drawn on
• Trick: The Answer in Advance · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 8 to 13 · Learn it in: 15 minutes · What the paper does: Written on and folded
• Trick: Walk Through a Paper · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 15 minutes · What the paper does: Cut into a huge ring
• Trick: The Loop of Mystery · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 7 to 12 · Learn it in: 15 minutes · What the paper does: Twisted and cut
• Trick: The Missing Digit · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 9 to 13 · Learn it in: 15 minutes · What the paper does: Written on
• Trick: The Book Test · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 10 to 13 · Learn it in: 15 minutes · What the paper does: Written on and sealed
• Trick: The Instant Magic Square · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 10 to 13 · Learn it in: 20 minutes · What the paper does: Drawn on

Ten are Apprentice tricks, which work the first try, and ten are Conjurer tricks with a little setting up or practice. None is a Wizard trick that needs days. The count comes from the shop's own list of props: any sheet of paper, a paper square, a paper strip, an index card, an envelope or white paper.

Roll and fold

The Hole in Your Hand is one of the two quickest tricks in the shop and the one I would teach a five-year-old tonight. Roll a sheet into a tube, look through it with one eye, hold your other hand beside it, and a hole appears in your palm. It is the one trick where the audience does it to themselves, so everybody has a turn.

The Linking Paper Clips takes two minutes. Fold a strip of paper into an S, clip two paperclips onto it far apart, pull the ends, and the clips leap off joined together. Nobody touches them; the paper does all of it. The page suggests giving the linked pair away afterwards as a party favour.

The Impossible Hole is a puzzle. A big coin goes through a hole the size of a small one, once you know how to fold the paper. The Coin Fold wraps a coin in a paper packet that looks sealed, then tears the packet into pieces: the coin has gone. Both use coins, so both pages

carry the shop's line about keeping coins away from little ones under 4.

Tear

The Coin Fold's tearing is the noisy kind, and the noise is part of the misdirection: the shop's lesson on misdirection says ears pull eyes. The Balloon Static Wand tears paper strips into little pieces for a balloon to lift off the table, with a grown-up blowing up the balloon.

The drawer's Wizard trick, the Torn and Restored Napkin, tears a napkin into pieces and opens it out whole. It takes two to four days, and its page calls it the shop's hardest trick.

Cut, twist and walk through

Walk Through a Paper is the one in the title. You hold up an index card, say you can walk through it, wait for the laughing, and make a zigzag of cuts. It opens into an enormous ring and you step through it. The page says a whole sheet makes a ring big enough for a grown-up, and that the thinner the cuts, the bigger the ring. It is one of the shop's show closers and ends the ready-made Grand Illusionist show for ages 10 to 12.

The Loop of Mystery cuts three paper loops down the middle. One falls into two rings, one opens into a single ring twice the size, and the third becomes two rings linked like a chain. The difference is a twist you can't see once the loop is closed, and the half-twisted one has only one side, which is why cutting it never gives two pieces.

Scissors

Three of these use kid scissors, and the shop treats each one carefully:

- The Impossible Hole: a grown-up cuts the circle out. That step is theirs on the trick page.
- Walk Through a Paper: the cutting steps ask for a grown-up's help or a grown-up's check, and the cuts only go into paper.
- The Loop of Mystery: a grown-up helps with the cutting and stays beside the scissors, which only ever cut paper.

The shop's line for every cutting trick is the same: "Cutting! Ask a grown-up to help, and cut only paper, card or string."

Paper as a notepad

The other twelve tricks in the table use paper to hold a prediction, a drawing, a message or a set of numbers. The Secret Number Cards are six cards you can print and cut out from the printables, and the Magic Number 1089 and the Book Test seal a prediction in an envelope before anybody chooses anything. The Arrow Flip and Secret Message Ink are kitchen science on paper.

Where to start

The Hole in Your Hand tonight, the Linking Paper Clips tomorrow, and Walk Through a Paper at the weekend with a grown-up beside the scissors. If you would rather Flick chose, Pick me a trick asks four three-box questions and hands over one trick. The through-things page has every trick where something passes through something solid, and the household items page has the rest of the house.

Questions grown-ups ask

Which paper trick suits the youngest?

The Hole in Your Hand: one minute to learn, ages 5 to 9, and nothing to cut. The Linking Paper Clips also fits from 5, but it uses paperclips, which the shop keeps away from little ones under 4.

Does my child need to use scissors?

Only for three of the twenty. In the Impossible Hole a grown-up does the cutting; in Walk Through a Paper and the Loop of Mystery a grown-up helps, and the scissors only ever cut paper.

Can paper tricks make a whole show?

Nearly. Open with the Hole in Your Hand, which the ready-made Mind Reader show also opens with, and close with Walk Through a Paper. The show page builds a running order from whatever your child can do.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, and the Magic Shop needs no sign-up. The library has stories for when the paper runs out.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/paper-magic-tricks-for-kids