# Personalized stories for kids with AI: what's worth tailoring

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AI can tailor a story to a child's ideas, reading level, practice words and comfort with scary. What Peabody personalizes, what it leaves out, and what the research says.

Peabody (peabody.kids) writes personalized stories for kids with AI, but it personalizes the things that help a child read: their own ideas, their reading level, the words they're practising, the mood they want, and how scary they're allowed to go. What it deliberately doesn't need is personal information. A child can make personalized stories with no name, no email and no age, free through the end of 2026.

"Personalized" can mean a lot of things in children's apps. Here's how we think about it, and an honest note on what research does and doesn't say.

## Five kinds of personalization, ranked by how much they matter

### 1. Their reading level

This matters most, and it's the one most story apps skip. A story that's too hard becomes a story a grown-up reads aloud. One that's too easy is over before it's practice.

Peabody starts from the sentence a child taps as one they can read comfortably, then measures every story in code: sentence length, how many words are uncommon, and for early readers, words per page and sight words. Library shelves are sorted the same way, by measured level, from Pre-K to 8th grade. When the books a child reads look consistently too easy or too hard, Peabody can offer a quick five-question game to check. More in what "reading level" really means.

### 2. The words they're practising

Each story carries practice words: sight words for early readers, five vocabulary words for readers from 2nd grade up. Each child's words are tracked separately, and missed words come back first in the warm-up, so practice follows the child rather than a fixed list. See how Peabody tracks the words your child knows.

### 3. Their own ideas

The child picks who, where and what happens, from idea bubbles or their own typing: a robot chef, a planet made of candy, a mysterious egg. Their ideas come first in the writer's instructions. This is the part kids feel most: it's their story.

## 4. The mood

Funny, happy, exciting, adventure, silly, magical, mystery, cozy, intense, a bit sad, or spooky. One tap changes the whole feel of the story.

## 5. The scariness ceiling

Some kids love a shiver; some don't. Peabody labels every story gentle, spooky, scary or horror and never shows a child a story above their ceiling. Children using Peabody without a grown-up's account get gentle stories until 1st grade and never past spooky.

## What about putting my child's name in the story?

Stories "starring your child" are the classic personalized book, and kids do enjoy them. Peabody handles names carefully:

- Without an account, Peabody doesn't know your child's name at all. They're a pen name, like Laser Kraken, and the hero comes from their ideas.
- With a free family account, a grown-up can choose whether a child's first name may appear in their own stories. That name stays inside the family: outside it, a child is only ever their pen name, and real names are swapped out of story text.

We think that's the right trade. A name makes a story feel special, but it isn't what makes it good reading practice, and it's personal information a reading app doesn't need.

## What the research says (and doesn't)

It's tempting to say "personalized stories make kids learn more." The evidence doesn't support that claim, so we don't make it:

- Studies of children making choices find that choice and ownership can raise interest in a task. That's encouraging, but most of it is lab work, and it's about motivation, not reading scores.
- Research on putting a child's own name in a story is mixed. One study of digital personalized books found no vocabulary gain from being the hero.
- What is well supported is the spacing of practice: words practised a little on several days are remembered better than the same practice in one sitting. That's why Peabody's personalization centres on level and words, not on names.

So our honest pitch is narrower: a story from your child's own ideas gives them a reason to read it tonight, and maybe to read it out loud to you. A story at their level means they actually can.

## Personalization without collecting personal data

Here's what Peabody uses to personalize a story for a child without an account:

- Used: The ideas they tap or type · Not asked for: Name
- Used: The sentence they can read (their level) · Not asked for: Age or birthday
- Used: Their practice words and past checks · Not asked for: Email or phone
- Used: The mood they pick · Not asked for: Photos or voice
- Used: Their scariness ceiling · Not asked for: School or address

Their ideas are deleted once the story has been safety-screened. More in no name, no email, no account.

## Try a personalized story tonight

Go to peabody.kids and tap Make my own story! Ask your child three questions first: Who's it about? Where are they? What goes wrong? Then let them tap the bubbles that match, pick a mood, and make it. Each child can make up to three new stories a day, free.

## Questions parents ask

## Are Peabody's stories personalized?

Yes: to your child's ideas, measured reading level, practice words, chosen mood and scariness ceiling. Without an account, Peabody doesn't use your child's name or any personal details.

## Can my child be the hero?

The hero comes from their ideas. With a free family account, a grown-up can let a child's first name appear in their own stories; it never appears outside the family.

## Do personalized stories help kids learn more words?

We don't claim that, because the research is mixed. What Peabody relies on is reading at the right level and practising words a little on several days, which memory research supports.

## What does Peabody send to the AI?

Peabody sends the AI only what it needs to write the story: the ideas, the level, the words and the mood. For a child without an account that includes no name. Ideas are deleted after the story is screened.

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Free at peabody.kids/blog/personalized-stories-for-kids