Books for a preschool theme, by reading level

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Free books for preschool themes, sorted by level: which ones a child can follow along with (levels 0 to 3) and which are read-alouds for you, theme by theme.

Pick three or four books for a theme: a short one the children can follow along with, one with a pattern they can say, and one longer story you read aloud. Every theme in Peabody's planner lists books from Peabody's free library, each with its level: levels 0 to 3 are ones a child follows along with, and anything above 3 is marked read-aloud for the grown-up. Peabody is free through the end of 2026, and the books need no sign-in.

This post explains what the levels mean in a room of three- and four-year-olds, then lists real books from the themes, sorted by level.

What the levels mean in a preschool room

Peabody gives every story a level. In a preschool room, they sort into two groups.

Levels 0 and 1 are a few words a page with a strong pattern. Think of a book like Pit, Pat, where the rain on the leaves taps out the same sound page after page. A four-year-old won't read it alone, but they can say the pattern back to you, guess the next word, and "read" it to a friend.

Levels 2 and 3 are short sentences. They still follow along well, especially the second and third time through.

Above level 3, the planner marks a book read-aloud. These are longer stories and true books, like The Little Red Hen or Who Lives Under the Log? You read, they listen and look.

None of this is a test of the children. It's a way to know, before you sit down at circle time, whether a book is one they can join in on or one where they'll sit and listen.

Follow-along books: levels 0 and 1

These are the books for the youngest, for the first read of the week, and for children who want to "read" to you.

- Book: Pit, Pat · Level: 0 · Some of its themes: Leaves, weather, rain and rainbows, music
- Book: Did It · Level: 0 · Some of its themes: All about me, feelings
- Book: Dad Naps · Level: 0 · Some of its themes: Bears and hibernation, winter and snow, families, night and day
- Book: Pat, Pat, Pat · Level: 0 · Some of its themes: Thankful, five senses, families, friends and kindness

- Book: Tim Taps · Level: 0 · Some of its themes: Five senses, music, letters and sounds
- Book: Ten Pigs · Level: 1 · Some of its themes: Farm, fairy tales, counting
- Book: Can Ted Hop? · Level: 1 · Some of its themes: All about me, my body
- Book: The Red Bus · Level: 1 · Some of its themes: Colors, community helpers, transportation, counting
- Book: Pup in the Tub · Level: 1 · Some of its themes: Pets, water

Follow-along books: levels 2 and 3

These carry a little more story. They're good for the second book of the week, and for the threes and fours.

- Book: A Bun for Fran · Level: 2 · Some of its themes: Apples, thankful, gingerbread, friends and kindness
- Book: The Big Truck · Level: 2 · Some of its themes: Pumpkins, transportation, construction and tools
- Book: Fish in a Dish · Level: 2 · Some of its themes: Ocean, beach and sand, water, boats
- Book: Frog on a Log · Level: 2 · Some of its themes: Frogs and ponds
- Book: A Nest on the Hill · Level: 2 · Some of its themes: Leaves, birds and nests, spring
- Book: Meg and the Seed · Level: 3 · Some of its themes: Apples, pumpkins, seeds and growing, flowers, spring
- Book: At the Farm · Level: 3 · Some of its themes: Farm, pumpkins, scarecrows and harvest
- Book: Not Yet, Ted · Level: 3 · Some of its themes: Bears and hibernation, space, camping, night and day
- Book: Ants Are Strong · Level: 3 · Some of its themes: Bugs, rocks and dirt
- Book: Kip and the Crab · Level: 3 · Some of its themes: Ocean, summer, beach and sand, boats

Read-alouds: above level 3

These are for you to read. They suit the end of the week, when the children know the theme well enough to follow a longer story, or nap time in a mixed room, when the oldest are still awake.

- Book: The Little Red Hen · Level: 4 · Some of its themes: Farm, fairy tales
- Book: Lion and Mouse · Level: 4 · Some of its themes: Zoo animals, jungle
- Book: Johnny Appleseed · Level: 5 · Some of its themes: Apples
- Book: The Enormous Turnip · Level: 5 · Some of its themes: Pumpkins, seeds and growing
- Book: The Gingerbread Man · Level: 5 · Some of its themes: Gingerbread

- Book: Frogs Are Amazing · Level: 5 · Some of its themes: Frogs and ponds
- Book: The Bean in the Cup · Level: 5 · Some of its themes: Seeds and growing, flowers, spring
- Book: The Bear Who Could Not Sleep · Level: 6 · Some of its themes: Bears and hibernation
- Book: The Moon Follows Me · Level: 6 · Some of its themes: Space, camping, night and day

How the planner uses them in a week

The wall sheet reads the first book twice and spreads the others across the week:

- Monday: book one.
- Tuesday: book two.
- Wednesday: book one again.
- Thursday: book three.
- Friday: book four, which is often the read-aloud.

Take the apple week. Monday is Meg and the Seed (level 3), Tuesday is Jen and the Jam (level 1), Wednesday is Meg and the Seed again, Thursday is A Bun for Fran (level 2), and Friday is Johnny Appleseed, a read-aloud. Circle time's book line shows the level next to the title, or "(read aloud)," so whoever is covering knows what they're holding.

The room's ages change the advice. For infants and toddlers, the planner says one book, read every day; point and name. For threes and fours, it says to let a child hold the book at circle time.

Try this week

1. Open next week's theme in the planner and look at the books part.
2. Open the first book on a tablet or projector before the children arrive, so you know where the pattern is.
3. On Monday, read it once through. On Wednesday, stop before the last word of each page and let them say it.
4. On Friday, read the longest book to the oldest children, and let the youngest look at the pictures.
5. Put one of your own library books in the day notes if it fits the theme. It prints on the wall sheet.

The family note lists the books by title, so families can read the same ones at home at peabody.kids. The picking books guide has more on why reading a book three times is not running out of ideas, and the circle time post shows where the book fits in the five lines.

Three things providers ask

Can a four-year-old really read a level 0 book?

Not alone, and that's not the goal. A level 0 or 1 book has a pattern they can say with you and guess ahead. That's following along.

Do I need an account to open the books?

No. Every book in a theme is one of Peabody's own stories, free in the library with no sign-in and no ads.

Can I use my own books instead?

Yes. Use the planner's notes box for any day to write in a book from your shelf or your public library. It prints in that day's box on the wall sheet.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/preschool-theme-books-by-level