A random name picker from a list: paste it once, it stays on this device

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A free random name picker from your own list: paste names from a spreadsheet or a comma list once, and the picker and wheel keep it in your browser, nowhere else.

To pick a random name from your own list, paste the list into Peabody Teach's free name picker or wheel, one name a line. You paste it once: the list is saved in this browser and is there the next time you open the tool on the same computer, and it is never sent to Peabody or anyone else. There is no account, no import step and no class code. Peabody is free through the end of 2026.

This post covers what you can paste, how the list is kept, and what to do when you change computers.

What you can paste

Both tools read the box the same forgiving way:

- One name a line. The usual way. Blank lines are dropped and extra spaces are trimmed.
- A comma or semicolon list on a single line, such as "Ana, Ben, Cai". With no line breaks, commas and semicolons split the names.
- A column from a spreadsheet. Copy the first-name column and paste; each cell arrives on its own line.

The wheel reads a little more. A row of names copied across a spreadsheet becomes one slice each. Two columns pasted together become a slice and a hidden note, so a word and its meaning, or a question and its answer, arrive ready to use. You can also type a note yourself after a bar, such as "photosynthesis | how plants make food", and it shows under the winner after the spin.

If the same name appears twice, the picker says so ("Repeated: Sam") and treats each as its own card, so two students called Sam both get a turn. Add a last initial if you'd rather tell them apart on the screen.

How much it holds

- Names · Picker: Up to 300 · Wheel: Up to 1,000
- Length of each name · Picker: 80 characters · Wheel: 80, plus a note of up to 200
- Starts with · Picker: Example names to replace · Wheel: Example names to replace

The starting names on both are placeholders. Select them, paste your list over them, and you're done.

Where the list is kept

The list is saved in your browser's own storage on this computer, under the tool's name. The page says so under the box: the names are saved in this browser only and never sent anywhere. Open the picker tomorrow on the same computer and browser, and the class is there.

A few things follow from that:

- Another computer starts empty. The list lives on the device where you pasted it. Paste it once on each computer you teach from.
- A private window doesn't keep it. The tools still work with storage switched off, as some school browsers are set up, but the list is gone when the window closes.
- Clearing your browser's site data clears the list. Keep the original in your own files.
- The wheel's preset wheels keep their own lists. Editing the classroom jobs wheel doesn't change your names on the main wheel.

Picker or wheel?

Both pick fairly from the list with your browser's secure random generator. The no-repeats post compares them in detail; in short:

- The picker deals names like cards, one to four at a time, and nobody comes up twice until everyone has. It shows the pick as a deck, one big name, or a gumball machine. It forgets who has been drawn when you reload the page.
- The wheel spins, and with Fade the winner it greys out each winner until a new round. It remembers who has had a turn in this browser, and "Who's away today?" skips absent students until midnight.

Changing the list

On the picker, editing the list shuffles the deck again and nobody counts as drawn, so make changes before you start a round. Add a late arrival, then press Reset. On the wheel you can edit the list at any time; Clear all empties it.

Keep the names on your computer

Everything here works because the list never leaves the browser. Both tools can copy a link that carries the list inside it, after the # sign, which browsers never send to a server. That link is useful for a list of jobs, topics or vocabulary to give a colleague. For a class list, keep it on your own computer and paste it there. First names or initials are plenty for picking turns.

When the turns are done, Peabody's free stories are leveled from the first readers to 8th grade, for a read-aloud or a quiet read.

Questions

How do I pick a random name from a list I already have?

Copy the names from your spreadsheet or document and paste them into Peabody Teach's name picker or wheel, one a line. Press Space to pick. The list is saved in your browser for next time, free through the end of 2026.

Do I have to type my class list in every time?

No. Paste it once and it stays in that browser on that computer. On a different computer, or in a private window, you paste it again.

Is my class list sent anywhere?

No. The picker and wheel run in your browser and keep the list in its own storage on your computer. There is no account, and nothing you paste is sent to Peabody or anyone else.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/random-name-picker-from-list