Read it to someone: why your child reading aloud to you matters

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Being the audience, not the grader. How to listen when your child reads aloud, what Peabody's Read it to someone! mode does, and why Peabody itself never listens.

When your child reads aloud to you, you hear what no app can: which words are automatic, which need sounding out, and whether the story makes sense to them. And your child gets something an app can't give either, a real audience. Peabody (peabody.kids) builds this in: after a child finishes a story they made, a Read it to someone! button turns it into big, calm pages for reading to whoever's on the couch. Peabody never listens to your child read, and nothing is recorded. The audience is you. It's free through the end of 2026.

Why reading aloud to a person matters

Reading silently, a child can skip a hard word and you'd never know. Reading aloud, everything is out in the open, which is useful for both of you:

- You hear where they are. Smooth sentences, stumbles, guesses, self-corrections. A few minutes of listening tells you more than any score.
- They practise with support. A grown-up nearby can help at the moment it's needed.
- It gives reading a reason. "Read it to Grandma" is a different invitation from "go read for ten minutes."

What does the research say? Programs that trained parents to listen to their young children read, regularly over weeks, have often improved reading, but the studies are small and mostly decades old, and a recent careful trial found no gain. What seems to matter most is how the grown-up listens, not just that they do. So here's how.

How to listen: five simple steps

1. Start together if it's hard. Read the first sentence together, then let them take over.
2. Pause. When they get stuck, wait about five seconds before helping. Often they'll work it out.
3. Prompt. "What's the first sound?" or sound it out together.
4. Tell. Still stuck? Just say the word. They repeat it and carry on. No big deal.
5. Praise something specific. "You worked out cautious all by yourself!" beats "good job."

Two things to avoid: correcting every small slip (it turns story time into a test), and "look at the picture and guess", which most reading teachers now discourage for working out words.

Above all, be the audience, not the grader. Laugh at the funny bits. Gasp at the cliffhanger.

Ask what they think happens next.

What Peabody's Read it to someone! mode does

When a child finishes a story they made, and any time afterwards from their shelf, they can tap Read it to someone!

- Peabody asks "Who's listening?" and your child picks: a grown-up, a sibling, or someone else.
- The story switches to extra-large type with a calm look, one page at a time, easy to follow from the couch.
- Peabody says, "Take a big breath. Ready, set, read!"
- At the end, the story's new words go up big for everyone to see. That's a natural moment to ask, "What does cautious mean?"

Every line in it is written ahead of time: no AI, and nothing is recorded.

Why Peabody never listens

Some reading apps use the microphone to score a child's reading. Peabody chose not to:

- No recordings, ever. There's nothing of your child's voice stored anywhere, and no reading is scored by ear. (A button in a few boxes turns speech into typed words; no sound reaches Peabody.)
- It means Peabody can't measure fluency or pronunciation, and we say so plainly.
- It keeps the listening where it works best, with a person who can laugh, help and say "one more page?"

Who can be the audience?

Anyone who'll listen for a few minutes:

- A parent, at bedtime or after dinner.
- A grandparent on a video call. Reading to someone far away is a lovely way to keep in touch.
- A younger sibling. Big kids reading to little ones is a confidence boost for the reader and a treat for the listener.
- A friend. If your child's story is gentle or spooky and has passed the safety screens, they can share it with a friend by its story number. See sharing a story by number.

A bedtime note

Aaron, who built Peabody, saw his own kids beg to read the story they'd made to whoever would come and listen. That's his family's experience, not a promise. If you try it at bedtime, consider keeping screens for earlier in the evening and having your child read it from the screen in bedtime mode with the lights low, or tell it to you from memory. More in an AI

bedtime story generator that keeps bedtime calm.

Try it tonight

1. Let your child make a story from their own ideas. The first three pages are ready in seconds.
2. Let them read it once on their own.
3. Then tap Read it to someone! and settle in as the audience.

Or pick a free story from the library at a comfortable level and have them read you one page.

Questions parents ask

Should my child read aloud to me?

Yes, if you can. Hearing your child read shows you which words come easily and which don't, and being their audience gives the reading a purpose. Keep it short, help with a pause and a prompt, and praise something specific.

How often should my child read aloud?

A few minutes on most days is a good aim. There's no research-backed ideal number of minutes; a regular short session with a clear end is easier to keep up.

Does Peabody listen to my child read?

No. Peabody never hears your child read and records nothing. Its Read it to someone! mode makes the story easy to read aloud to a real person in the room.

What if my child gets frustrated reading aloud?

Go down a level so the story feels easy, read the first page together, and keep it to one page if that's what works tonight. If reading aloud is always upsetting, mention it to their teacher.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/read-aloud-to-someone