Writing prompts for kids: 60 story ideas for an AI story or a paper one

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Story prompts for kids, sorted into who, where and what happens, plus moods, mix-and-match tips and three questions that turn any idea into a real story.

The easiest way to give a child a story idea is to hand them three pieces: someone, somewhere, and something that happens. "A penguin on vacation" plus "an underwater city" plus "a treasure map" is already a story. Below are 60 prompts from Peabody's own idea bubbles, sorted that way, plus a few moods and tips. Use them on paper, out loud at dinner, or in Peabody (peabody.kids), where a child can tap them and get a short AI-written story at their reading level in seconds, free through the end of 2026.

Want one picked for you? The free story idea generator mixes a who, a where and a what-happens at the tap of a button, with settings for ages 4 to 6, 7 to 9 and 10 to 13.

Someone: 20 characters

- a dragon who loves to bake
- a robot who collects socks
- a ghost who tells jokes
- a T. rex who wants a hug
- an octopus who juggles
- a grumpy unicorn
- a wizard who forgot a spell
- a cat who runs a bakery
- a bunny who can't hop
- a lion with a tiny roar
- a penguin on vacation
- a bee who is allergic to flowers
- a whale who sings
- a spider who knits
- an alien who lands in the backyard
- a superhero who can only fly on Tuesdays
- a pirate who gets seasick
- a kind troll
- a statue that comes alive
- a new kid at school

Tip: the funniest characters have one surprising detail. A lion is fine; a lion with a tiny roar is a

story.

Somewhere: 20 places

- a castle in the clouds
- an underwater city
- a planet made of candy
- a treehouse
- a dark forest
- an ice cave
- grandma's house
- a house made of candy
- the school playground
- a toy store
- a library at night
- an amusement park
- a mushroom village
- the other side of a mirror
- under the bed
- inside a backpack
- inside a video game
- a dragon's cave
- a lost city
- a coral reef

Tip: an ordinary place at an unusual time works wonders. A classroom at night or a library at night is instantly mysterious.

Something happens: 20 problems and surprises

- a potion that goes wrong
- a mysterious egg
- a box that won't open
- a letter with no name
- a treasure map
- a backpack that's bigger inside
- a kite that won't come down
- a scarf that keeps growing
- a shrinking potion
- mysterious footprints
- a locked door

- a seed that grows into a beanstalk
- a kitten stuck in a tree
- a bird who lost her song
- becoming king for a day
- a compass that points to friends
- a really bad day
- a new baby brother
- a game that comes alive
- a pie contest

Tip: a good story needs a problem. If your child picks a character and a place but nothing goes wrong, ask, "Uh oh, what happens next?"

Pick a mood

The same idea feels completely different depending on the mood. On Peabody's make page a child picks one:

- Funny: jokes and silly surprises
- Happy: kindness, friendship and a smile at the end
- Exciting: fast, with a race against time
- Adventure: a journey and a brave choice
- Silly: wonderfully ridiculous
- Magical: wonder and a little magic
- Mystery: clues and a surprise answer
- Cozy: soft, calm, good for bedtime
- Intense: big stakes and suspense, nothing frightening
- A bit sad: a gentle sad moment that ends with comfort
- Spooky: shivery, never truly frightening (only if your child's scariness setting allows it)

Try the same three ideas with two different moods and compare. It's a fun way to talk about how writers make choices.

Three questions that turn an idea into a story

Ideas are a start. These three questions, asked before writing, make almost any story better:

1. What does your character want? (The penguin wants to find the best ice cream on the beach.)
2. What gets in the way? (The ice cream keeps melting before she gets there.)
3. How does your character fix it? (She brings a snowball cooler she built herself.)

A want, a problem and a fix is the shape of most stories kids love. It's also what Peabody's writer is told to build: a want and an obstacle in the first pages, the hero making the choice that solves it, and a payoff set up earlier. Getting help from a trusted grown-up counts as

solving it; keeping secrets from grown-ups never does.

How to use these prompts with AI

On Peabody, the make page shows eight idea bubbles at a time, drawn from more than 670 like the ones above, and More ideas draws another eight. Your child taps a few, or types their own, picks a mood, and taps Make it! The first three pages arrive in seconds, at their reading level, with practice words inside. Every idea goes through a safety screen first, and anything off-limits gets a kind redirect instead of a story.

Each child can make up to three stories a day, free. If you want the step-by-step, see how to make a story with AI with your kid.

How to use them without a screen

- Story dice: write characters, places and problems on scraps of paper in three cups. Draw one from each.
- Dinner story: each person adds one sentence. Start with a prompt.
- Draw it first: have your child draw the character, then tell you the story.
- Write a tiny book: fold two sheets of paper into an eight-page booklet and write one sentence per page.

Questions parents ask

What are good story ideas for kids?

Combine a character with a surprising detail (a lion with a tiny roar), an interesting place (a library at night) and a problem (a locked door). Then ask what the character wants and what gets in the way.

How do I help my child come up with a story?

Offer three choices for each piece, someone, somewhere and something that happens, and let them pick. Then ask, "What does your character want? What goes wrong?"

Can my child use these prompts with an AI story generator?

Yes. On Peabody, many of these prompts are tap-able idea bubbles. A child picks a few and a mood, and Peabody writes a short story at their reading level, safety-screened, free through 31 December 2026.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/story-ideas-for-kids