The 8 types of magic tricks (and why some say 7)

Peabody blog · Games · updated 2026-10-31

The eight types of magic trick, with an easy trick and a count for each from our eighty-trick Magic Shop, and why some lists say seven.

The eight types of magic trick are vanish, production, transformation, transposition, levitation, penetration, restoration and prediction: something disappears, appears, changes, jumps, floats, passes through something solid, is mended, or was known all along. Lists of seven usually fold two of those together, and I will come to how.

When I built the Peabody Magic Shop for my kids, every trick had to go into one box, so the shop could be browsed by what the audience sees as well as by what you need. Eighty tricks later, every one of them fits one of these eight, and none needed a ninth. I wrote about where the secrets hide in how do magicians do tricks; this post is the shorter answer to "what are the types?", with how many of each the shop has.

The eight types, with a trick for each

- Type: Vanish · What the audience sees: Something disappears · Tricks in the shop: 7 · Try first: The Vanishing Pencil · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 5 minutes
- Type: Production · What the audience sees: Something appears · Tricks in the shop: 5 · Try first: Eleven Fingers · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 3 minutes
- Type: Transformation · What the audience sees: Something changes · Tricks in the shop: 10 · Try first: The Rubber Pencil · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 1 minute
- Type: Transposition · What the audience sees: Something jumps to another place · Tricks in the shop: 10 · Try first: The Jumping Rubber Band · Level: Conjurer · Ages: 6 to 11 · Learn it in: 15 minutes
- Type: Levitation · What the audience sees: Something floats · Tricks in the shop: 10 · Try first: The Floating Pencil · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 5 minutes
- Type: Penetration · What the audience sees: Something passes through something solid · Tricks in the shop: 5 · Try first: The Hole in Your Hand · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 9 · Learn it in: 1 minute
- Type: Restoration · What the audience sees: Something broken is whole again · Tricks in the shop: 4 · Try first: Thumb Off · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 5 to 8 · Learn it in: 5 minutes
- Type: Prediction · What the audience sees: You knew all along, or read their mind · Tricks in the shop: 29 · Try first: The Answer Is Always 3 · Level: Apprentice · Ages: 6 to

11 · Learn it in: 2 minutes

The counts add up to eighty, the whole shop. Each type name links to its own page, which lists every trick of that kind in the shop's order, easiest first.

1. Vanish

Something is there, and then it is not. It has nearly always gone somewhere nobody was looking. In the Vanishing Pencil you tap a pencil on the table three times, and on three it is gone; everybody laughs when you turn round and it is tucked behind your ear. The shop has seven vanishes.

2. Production

A vanish backwards: something appears from nowhere. The thing was hidden all along, and the skill is choosing the moment. Eleven Fingers produces a finger out of a muddled count, which makes it the gentlest production there is. The shop has five.

3. Transformation

One thing turns into another, or changes how it behaves. Some are illusions your eyes make, and some are kitchen science. The Rubber Pencil wobbles until it looks bendy, then is handed over solid; it takes one minute to learn. The shop has nine, and the Potion Lab's ones are for looking at, never for drinking.

4. Transposition

Something leaves one place and turns up in another. The Jumping Rubber Band hops from your first two fingers to your last two as your hand opens. It is a Conjurer trick, fifteen minutes of practice in a mirror, which is why it is the one row in the table that is not Apprentice: the shop's only Apprentice jump uses paper clips, which carry the small-parts note. The shop has eight.

5. Levitation

Something floats, or hangs where it should fall. A hidden finger, a balance point or the surface of water does the holding. In the Floating Pencil a pencil stays stuck to your open hand while a finger from your other hand holds it from behind. Levitation is the shop's second-biggest kind, with ten tricks, and most of them only work from the front.

6. Penetration

One solid thing passes through another. The Hole in Your Hand is the easiest, and it happens inside your audience's own eyes: they look down a paper tube with both eyes open and see a hole straight through their palm. The shop has five.

7. Restoration

Something is broken and comes back whole. Thumb Off is the friendliest, because the thing broken is your own thumb and nothing is really damaged. The shop has four, and most of the others are Wizard tricks, because mending something in plain sight takes days of practice.

8. Prediction

You knew the answer before they chose, or you seem to read their mind. This is by far the biggest kind in the shop, with twenty-two tricks, because arithmetic is a wonderful magician: the Answer Is Always 3 has somebody do sums in their head that always land on 3, whatever number they started with. Every trick of this kind in the Mind Reader's Corner has a box explaining why the maths works.

Why some lists say seven

People ask "what are the seven types of magic tricks?" quite often, and the honest answer is that there is no official list. Anybody sorting tricks has to decide where the lines go, and lists of seven usually fold two of our eight together.

The easiest pair to fold is vanish and production, because one is the other run backwards: lots of tricks make something disappear from one place and appear in another, which is also what a transposition is. Restoration is another one that gets folded, often into transformation, since a broken thing turning whole is a kind of change. Neither way is wrong. We kept eight because each one tells a child something different about where to look for the secret, and because every trick in the shop sat comfortably in one box.

If your child wants to try one of each, eight tricks in eight evenings is a lovely project, and seven of the eight in the table are Apprentice tricks that work the first try. If they would rather be handed one, Pick me a trick asks four quick questions and Flick, the rabbit who runs the shop, hands over a trick that fits what is on the table.

Questions grown-ups ask

Which type of magic trick is easiest for a beginner?

Prediction, usually. With arithmetic or a forced choice doing the work, there is no secret move to fumble, so a nervous child can concentrate on the performing. Transformation is a close second, because the Rubber Pencil takes a minute.

Which type impresses a room most?

The visual ones: levitation, transformation, vanish and penetration read from the back of a room. Prediction is best for a small group or one person who can follow along.

Do children need to know the names?

No, but they help. A child who knows a trick is a "vanish" starts asking where the thing went, which is the first question a magician asks too.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, and the Magic Shop needs no sign-up. What a child learns stays on their own device; the only thing sent is an anonymous count when a trick is marked as shown to somebody. For a story about something that vanishes, the library has plenty.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/types-of-magic-tricks