What kids told Peabody in October, and what we changed

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Kids sent 45 notes through the Tell Peabody button in October. Here is what they said and what changed on 31 October, from the story maker to Pet Hatch.

In October, kids sent Peabody 45 notes through the Tell Peabody button, 39 of them in the last week, and answered "how hard was it?" 43 times at the end of a game. Almost every note came from a child. On 31 October we changed nine things because of them: the story maker stopped turning down good ideas, Pet Hatch pets stopped coming back sick, the profile page now answers the questions kids asked on it, and several games got clearer or, when a kid said "too easy", harder. Peabody (peabody.kids) is a free reading and learning-games site for kids, free for the rest of 2026. This post is for the parents and teachers whose kids wrote to us, and for the kids reading along.

Why kids' notes matter here

Tell Peabody is the button on every page. A child can tap a picture, say a few words or type a sentence, and it comes to the people who build the site. We read every one. Kids are plain-spoken, which is the most useful thing about them: when a game confuses them, they say so in a few words. Most of what follows started with a sentence like that.

The story maker says yes to good ideas

The story maker was turning down perfectly good ideas. "A secret garden", "a fire truck rescue" and "the cat sat on the mat" all came back with "try again". The ideas were fine. The first draft had missed a small writing rule of ours: the opening line was supposed to be a question, or one page ran a few words long. Those are rules for polish, and a child shouldn't lose a story over them.

Now a draft like that is served, but only when it has passed the safety screens. A draft the screens flag is still written again, the same as before. The safety checks were not loosened at all; only the writing-style rules got kinder. Ideas typed in Persian or Arabic no longer fail either, because the check that a story stays true to the child's idea used to stumble on words that aren't in the Latin alphabet. Nine of the ten ideas turned away in the last ten days of October would become stories now.

Pet Hatch: pets don't die on a kid

A child wrote "my pets are dying". They were right that it looked that way. A pet left overnight came back hungry and looking sick, and could faint soon after. That is not a fair thing to do to a child who simply went to bed.

In Pet Hatch now, a pet comes back from a night away hungry, not sick. Its health falls half as fast as it did, nothing catches anything while the child is away or in the first 15 minutes of play, and one feed wakes a sleepy pet. The messages say what to do, such as "Mo is hungry! Tap Care, then ", and many hungry pets make one message instead of a pile of them. No pet is ever lost unless the child chooses to let it go. That matches the rule all of Peabody's games keep, written up in nothing lost.

The profile page answers what kids asked there

Several notes came from kids' own pages, asking how to change their grade and "how do I earn points". Both answers now sit on the page. A line reads "My grade: 4th grade · Change" (with the child's own grade), and one tap opens the grade picker; a child can always change their own grade. Under it, a line says how points come: finishing a story or doing some math. One child wrote "when you talk to me I talk to you", so the page got a "Talk with Peabody" door too (since removed).

"Who's Aaron?"

When a child sent a note, Peabody used to thank them with "I'll tell Aaron." Aaron is the person who started Peabody, but a child has no way to know that, and one asked "Who's Aaron?" Peabody now says "I'll tell the people who make me." The grown-ups' version still says Aaron reads every note, because he does.

A friendlier pumpkin and a safer banana

A child found the jack-o'-lantern in the Rainy Day Box scary. It had triangle eyes and a toothy grin. It now has round eyes and a curved smile, with no teeth. The Banana Ghosts recipe was rewritten too: nine steps, each one a single action, and a grown-up holds the banana for the cut.

Comic Studio and Infection, made clearer

In the Comic Studio, some kids didn't know what to do with an empty panel. The first screen now says a panel is a box for a picture you draw, and the "Draw a picture" button moved up to the top, above the panels.

In Infection, a visitor on a computer couldn't use their mouse. Some browsers won't lock the pointer to the game, and when that happened, clicks did nothing. Now a click fires and a drag looks around, lock or no lock. The scroll wheel steps one item at a time instead of spinning

through the whole bag on a trackpad, and a new player's first match is gentler. At the end of a match, tapping "too hard" or "too easy" now changes the next one.

Too easy means harder, not just faster

Until this month, no game read the "how hard was it?" answer. Now three do. When a child says "too easy", our aiming game brings more wind, longer shots and an extra guard. Wake the Dragon brings the dragon closer and blocks more tunnels, without raising the top speed. Key Race, one of the typing games, gives longer words and quicker pace cars. The idea is a game that asks more of a child, not one that only rushes them. Dip & Dash is next: most of its answers say it is too easy.

Math says what to do

Adding fractions with different bottoms was confusing kids, so the question now says what to do ("Add the two fractions") and has a "How to do it" button with three steps and an example that uses different numbers. The times tables ask the question in words, such as "What's seven times eight?", and a wrong answer gets "That's a tricky one!" instead of a plain no.

Kids who wrote will hear back

Kids who were signed in when they told us something get a note from Peabody the next time they visit, with what they said and what changed. A couple of notes we couldn't act on, and that's fine too.

Questions parents and teachers ask

Does Peabody read every note?

Yes. Every note is read by a person, and the ones we act on are marked done.

Does my child need an account to send a note?

No. Any child can press Tell Peabody. Only a child who was signed in can get a note back, because Peabody needs to know who to answer.

Did making the story maker say yes more often make it less safe?

No. Only the writing-style rules changed. Every story still passes the same safety screens before a child sees it, and a draft the screens flag is written again.

Tell us what to fix next

If your child found something confusing, too hard or too easy, ask them to press Tell Peabody, the button on every page, and say so in their own words. Grown-ups can write to aaron@peabody.kids. Then go back to the library or the front page and try what changed.