Where is my child stuck? What reading data can show you, and what it can't

Peabody blog · Words and levels · updated 2026-10-04

Missed words, books that were too easy or too hard, story parts and math facts. What Peabody's learning data shows a parent, honestly, and when to talk to a teacher.

Peabody (peabody.kids) watches a few specific things as a child reads: which practice words they miss and when, whether their recent books were all too easy or all too hard, how they answer questions after a story, which parts of a story they bring to their own ideas, and which times-table facts are slow or missed. With a free grown-up account, you see all of it in plain words. It can point you to what to practise tonight. It can't tell you why a child is struggling, and it isn't a diagnosis.

If you're reading this because you're worried, start here: you're not behind for asking, and the most useful next step is often a conversation with your child's teacher. This post explains what an app like Peabody can add, and where its view ends.

What a reading app can actually observe

Peabody doesn't listen to your child or watch their face. It only sees taps. From those taps, here's what it can honestly tell you:

- What Peabody sees: Which practice words are missed in the cold warm-up, and how often · What it shows you: Missed words come back first, every day until they're read right. The word table puts the newest trouble at the top · What it can't say: Why a word is hard, or how big your child's vocabulary is
- What Peabody sees: Which words have had three right days in a row · What it shows you: Words labelled sticking, practising or new · What it can't say: That a word is "learned" for good
- What Peabody sees: Words right before vs after each story · What it shows you: How many of a story's words your child read in the warm-up and after the story · What it can't say: That the story caused the learning
- What Peabody sees: Whether the last few books were all easy, or all hard · What it shows you: An offer of five quick questions to check the level · What it can't say: A reading-level score or a grade comparison
- What Peabody sees: Answers to four to six questions after each new story · What it shows you: Evidence Peabody uses to decide whether books fit · What it can't say: A comprehension score or a percentile
- What Peabody sees: Which story parts your child's ideas include (a hero, a place, a want, a problem, a try, an ending, a feeling) · What it shows you: Which parts your child now

brings, in words, over weeks, and one "next time, ask…" · What it can't say: Creativity, or a writing level

• What Peabody sees: Which times-table facts are quick, slow or missed · What it shows you: A heat grid of all 144 facts; practice leans toward the slow and missed ones · What it can't say: Gaps in math in general

That's a genuinely useful set of signals. It's also a narrow one, and the narrowness is the point: every line above comes from something your child actually did, not a guess about them.

Three patterns worth noticing

You don't need charts to use this. A few patterns are worth a look:

The same words keep coming back. If a handful of words have been "practising" for weeks, they're worth five minutes away from the screen. For sight words, write them on sticky notes around the house. For vocabulary words, use them yourself at dinner, then ask your child to.

Every book feels easy, or every book feels hard. Both are information. Peabody can offer a quick five-question check when the last few books point the same way. You can also simply move a floor up or down in the free library and listen to a page.

Ideas without a problem. Lots of young storytellers give a hero and a place but no problem. Peabody's grown-up view shows which story parts your child's ideas include, with one "next time, ask…" line. That's a small thing to coach at bedtime: "What goes wrong for the dragon?"

What Peabody can't do

We'd rather say this plainly than let a dashboard imply more than it knows:

• It can't diagnose dyslexia or any learning difference. Nothing in Peabody is designed or tested for that.

• It can't hear your child read. Nothing is recorded or scored by ear, so it can't measure fluency, decoding or pronunciation.

• It doesn't give a Lexile, a percentile or a grade-norm comparison. Peabody doesn't measure Lexile, and it never compares one child with other children.

• It can't tell if your child uses a word in their own speech. Picking the right meaning isn't the same as using it.

• A three-choice word check can be guessed, and an early reader's "I read it" is their own tap. That's why one right answer never counts.

What it can do is show you the words and stories, in plain words, so you know what to ask about tonight. It even writes the question: one prompt about one of today's words, different each day.

When to talk to a teacher

Consider asking your child's teacher, or your pediatrician, about a reading assessment if:

- your child avoids reading aloud, or gets upset when asked;
- they're working hard and still find most words in a story at their grade hard to read;
- sounding out short words is still very difficult well into 1st grade;
- they understand stories read to them much better than ones they read themselves;
- a teacher has already mentioned a concern.

None of these mean something is wrong. They're reasons to get a proper look from someone trained to give one. Reading practice at home, with Peabody or with paper books, is a good companion to that, not a replacement.

A five-minute routine for tonight

1. Read one short story together, at a level where they stumble on only a word or two a page.
2. Pick one word they stumbled on. Say it, use it in a sentence about your day, and ask them to do the same.
3. Tomorrow, before reading, ask them to read or explain that word, cold.
4. Do it again the next day. Three right days running is a good sign it's sticking.

That's exactly what Peabody automates, but the idea works with any book. If you want Peabody to keep track, make a free story at your child's level. It's free through the end of 2026.

Questions parents ask

How can I tell where my child struggles with reading?

Listen to them read a page aloud, note the words they stop on, and see whether they can tell you what happened. An app like Peabody can add which practice words they keep missing and whether recent books felt too easy or too hard. For a full picture, ask their teacher about an assessment.

Can Peabody tell me if my child has dyslexia?

No. Peabody can't diagnose dyslexia or any learning difference, and it can't hear your child read. If you're concerned, talk to your child's teacher or pediatrician.

What does Peabody show grown-ups?

With a free grown-up account: each child's practice words labelled new, practising or sticking with the newest trouble first, how they did before and after each story, the story parts their ideas include, the concepts each story practised, and a heat grid of times-table facts.

Does Peabody compare my child with other children?

Never. There are no rankings, leaderboards or percentiles, for children or for grown-ups.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/where-is-my-child-stuck