A winter reading challenge for kids, 19 December to 3 January

Peabody blog · Reading · updated 2026-10-30

A free winter break reading challenge for kids, 19 Dec 2026 to 3 Jan 2027: 10, 6 or 4 books by age, a tracker that fills, a chart to print and a certificate.

Peabody's Winter Break challenge runs from Saturday 19 December 2026 to Sunday 3 January 2027, sixteen days, and the finish line depends on the reader's age: 10 books for ages 5 to 7 (read-alouds count), 6 books for ages 8 to 10, and 4 longer books from 11 up. Every book climbs the reader one step up a snowy mountain on the screen, the chart prints for the fridge, and the certificate prints at the top and not before. It is free, like the rest of Peabody through the end of 2026, and nothing a child logs leaves the device.

Start the Winter Break challenge, or read on for why it is built the way it is.

Why books, not minutes

Most library winter challenges count minutes: twenty a day, or eight hours by the end. Minutes are fair, but a child cannot see a minute. A book is a thing: it has a cover, it is finished or it is not, and on Peabody's tracker it is a step up the mountain. A timer also needs a grown-up to trust it, and the first argument over whether the last ten minutes counted is the end of the fun.

So the challenge counts books, and it sizes the number to the reader:

- Age: 5 to 7 · About: kindergarten to 2nd grade · Books to the top: 10, and a book read aloud to them counts
- Age: 8 to 10 · About: 3rd to 5th grade · Books to the top: 6
- Age: 11 and up · About: 6th grade and up · Books to the top: 4

Ten books in sixteen days is about one every day and a half for a kindergartner, which is what picture books and early readers allow. Four is about one every four days for a middle schooler with a real novel. If your family counts minutes anyway, the weekly reading log has a minutes column and a line for a grown-up to sign.

How a child logs a book

Nothing is typed by a child. The tracker asks who is reading (an animal face, never a name; brothers and sisters each pick their own, up to six on one device) and how old they are, once, with three big boxes. Then Log a book opens a shelf:

- Peabody's own stories at the reader's level. There are 425 free stories on 19 reading levels in the library, so a book read on Peabody is a tap.
- A book from one of Peabody's kids' lists, such as the top 25 books for a 2nd grader, for

the books from home or the school library.
• A book from a series, in order. If your child ticks books off on a series page, those count here too.
• A book from somewhere else. A grown-up presses and holds the button for two seconds and types the title. The title stays on the device and is never sent anywhere; the shelf shows it as a plain brown spine.

A double tap logs one book, and a favourite read again on another day counts again: re-reading is how young readers get fluent.

What prints

Three things, any time:

1. The chart: the mountain with numbered steps to colour by hand, a table of the books so far, a line that says "Read 6 books, 19 Dec – 27 Dec" for anyone keeping records, and a QR code back to the challenge (it carries no information about the child).
2. The log: the books, the dates and a column for a grown-up's signature.
3. The certificate, which stays dark until the finish line. There is no certificate for half way. Children know the difference between a prize for turning up and one they earned, and the finish line is the point.

What happens after 3 January

The challenge says "finished" on 4 January, and a reader who finished is offered the January challenge: a book or twenty minutes a day, and twenty coloured days out of thirty-one to finish, so a missed day costs nothing. 100 Books and Book Bingo have no end date at all.

Questions parents ask

Does my child need an account?

No. The tracker works for a visitor on any browser and keeps everything in that browser. A child who is signed in to Peabody gets their finish line from their grade instead of being asked their age.

We are travelling over the break. Does it work offline on paper?

Print the chart before you go. It has the same steps and a table for the titles, and a grown-up can fill in the certificate by hand at the certificate page.

What does Peabody see?

That a book was logged in the Winter Break challenge, and whether it was a reader's first book there or a later one. Never the book, the title, the face or the age. That count is how I will know, in December, whether a second book within a week is happening often enough to keep

building this.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/winter-reading-challenge-for-kids