What libraries' winter reading challenges ask for, and a home version

Peabody blog · Reading · updated 2026-10-30

Winter reading challenge library programmes, as I read them on 30 Oct 2026: minutes, hours or prompts, a log and a prize. Plus a free home version for 19 Dec to 3 Jan.

The library reading challenges I read on 30 October 2026 asked children for time rather than books, twenty minutes a day over the break or a number of hours, kept on a paper log or in an app and swapped for a prize; a home version can count books instead and needs nothing but a printer. This post sets out what each page asked for, plainly and with its date, and then the home version I built for Peabody, which runs from 19 December 2026 to 3 January 2027. It is free, like the rest of Peabody through the end of 2026.

If your library runs a winter challenge, join it. The library is where the books are. A home version is for the families whose library does not run one, whose child wants to count something else, or who will be away over the break.

What the pages asked for

I opened these on 30 October 2026; each may have changed since.

Mahopac Public Library, Children's Winter Reading Challenge. For kindergarten to 5th grade: twenty minutes of reading a day over the winter break, kept on a paper log that is swapped for a prize. The page was for last winter's challenge, 20 December 2025 to 3 January 2026, and said the event had passed. It did not name the prize or where to collect it.

Jefferson County Public Library (Colorado), Summer Reading. A summer programme rather than a winter one, but the same pattern in hours: eight hours is the finish line, and the page says an hour a week will get a reader there. It is for all ages, has three ways to sign up and a contest for schools, and runs in Beanstack. Prizes, it said, vary by age.

Scholastic Parents, "Winter Reading Challenge for Kids of All Ages" (published 10 December 2025). Not a library, but a winter challenge from a publisher. It is a list of 25 prompts, such as "Read a book with a snowman on the cover", with a printable PDF and a poster-size print, and no login. One list covers ages 3 to 13.

Beanstack. A tracker that libraries and schools buy to run their challenges; Jefferson County's runs on it. It has a minutes timer, badges, challenges that count minutes, books or days, and a scanner for a book's ISBN, and each child has a login and an app.

What they have in common

- Mahopac · Counts: 20 minutes a day · Kept on: A paper log · For: Kindergarten to 5th grade
- Jefferson County · Counts: 8 hours · Kept on: Beanstack · For: All ages
- Scholastic · Counts: 25 prompts · Kept on: A printable · For: Ages 3 to 13
- Beanstack · Counts: Minutes, books or days · Kept on: An app, a login each · For: Schools and libraries that buy it

Both libraries counted time, both kept a log, and both gave a prize at the end. That is a sensible design for a library: minutes are fair to slow readers and fast ones alike, and a prize is a reason to come back through the door.

A home version: Peabody's Winter Break

I built the Winter Break challenge to sit beside those, not to replace them. It differs in four ways.

It counts books, sized by age. Ten books for ages 5 to 7, with read-alouds counting; six for ages 8 to 10; four for 11 and up. A book is a thing a child can see and finish, and each one climbs a step up a snowy mountain on the screen.

No sign-up. It needs no account. The reader is an animal face, up to six on one device for brothers and sisters, and everything stays on that device. Peabody receives only a count that a book was logged, never the title, the face or the age.

The books are a tap away. Log a book shows Peabody's own stories near the reader's level, books from the kids' lists, series books, and "a book from somewhere else", where a grown-up holds a button for two seconds and types the title. The 425 free stories in the library cover 19 levels, and winter books for kids is a list for the library trip.

A certificate at the top, and no prize. The chart and the log print at any time; the certificate prints only at the finish line.

Doing both

The two fit together. If your library counts minutes, Peabody's weekly reading log has a column for pages or minutes and a line for a grown-up to sign, and the Winter Break chart prints a records line such as "Read 6 books, 19 Dec – 27 Dec". Ask your library whether it will take a log from home. If you liked Scholastic's prompts, Book Bingo has twenty-five written out, from "Snow, rain or wind" to "A story at night". And when the break ends, the January challenge counts a day with a book or twenty minutes, so a minutes habit carries on.

Questions parents ask

Can we do the library's challenge and Peabody's at the same time?

Yes. The same book can go on both: keep the library's log the way the library asks, and tap the book into Peabody's tracker for the mountain.

My library counts minutes. Can Peabody count minutes?

The Winter Break challenge counts books. The January challenge counts days, each with a finished book or twenty minutes of reading, and the paper weekly log has a minutes column.

Is there a prize?

No. There are no prizes and no leaderboards on Peabody. A child who reaches the finish line prints a certificate, and there is a blank one to fill in by hand.

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