Reading bingo: 25 prompts that are not about prizes

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Reading bingo prompts about kinds of books, not prizes: Peabody's whole 25-square card, why each square is there, free stories that fit, and how to play it.

Good reading bingo prompts name a kind of book, not a reward or a number: "a true book", "a fable", "a story at night". Each square should open a door to a shelf a child might walk past, and every square should be one any reader can fill at their own level. Peabody's Book Bingo card has twenty-four of those and a free centre. Below is every square, why it is on the card, and one free Peabody story that fits it, so you can see the door open. The card is free, like the rest of Peabody through the end of 2026.

Why the prompts are kinds of books

A bingo square is a small instruction, and children follow it. "Win a prize at five books" teaches that books are a way to get prizes. "A book about feelings" teaches that there are books about feelings, which is what I wanted the card to say.

So I kept three rules when I wrote the squares:

- Every square is a kind, never a title or a length. A fable can be a few pages or many; a reader at any level can fill it.
- Nothing needs a shop. No "new release", no award sticker, no particular edition.
- Every square can be filled free. Each one has at least three of Peabody's free stories that fit, and Peabody's own code checks that for every square.

The card, square by square

Row by row, as it sits on the card, with the reason for each square and one free story that fits.

- Square: A book about animals · Why it is there: An easy first stamp, so the card starts moving on day one. · A free story that fits: Frog on a Log, level 2
- Square: A true book · Why it is there: Reading is also for finding things out; this sends a story lover to the true shelf. · A free story that fits: Ants Are Strong, level 3
- Square: A fairy tale · Why it is there: The old shapes (threes, tricks, a happy ending) that other stories borrow. · A free story that fits: Henny Penny, level 5
- Square: A funny book · Why it is there: Permission to read something silly, which is a fine reason to read. · A free story that fits: Get Up, Gus!, level 1
- Square: A fable · Why it is there: Short, with a lesson a child can argue with. · A free story that fits: Lion and Mouse

• Square: A myth or a legend · Why it is there: Old stories that explain the world, or a hero people kept retelling. · A free story that fits: Johnny Appleseed, level 5
• Square: A mystery · Why it is there: Reading to find out: the pull of a question on the next page. · A free story that fits: Bo and the Bath Duck, level 4
• Square: A book about friends · Why it is there: Something every child knows about, and can talk about at a club. · A free story that fits: A Bun for Fran, level 2
• Square: A book about space or the sky · Why it is there: Looking up: the moon, the sun, the stars. · A free story that fits: The Moon Follows Me, level 6
• Square: Snow, rain or wind · Why it is there: The weather outside the window, in a book. · A free story that fits: Ruby and the Rainy Picnic, level 6
• Square: A book about a pet · Why it is there: Pets are family, and children have plenty to say about them. · A free story that fits: Bev Has a Pet, level 1
• Square: A science book · Why it is there: How things work, which is a different pleasure from what happens next. · A free story that fits: Dinosaurs Are Still Here, level 9
• Square: Free: any book you like · Why it is there: A breather in the middle: the centre counts from the start. · A free story that fits: Any book at all
• Square: A book about a family · Why it is there: Stories about the people at home. · A free story that fits: Dad Naps, level 0
• Square: Someone being brave · Why it is there: A character who does the hard thing, to talk about afterwards. · A free story that fits: Alone on Harrow Rock, level 12
• Square: Someone being kind · Why it is there: Kindness is a story too, not only a rule. · A free story that fits: The Little Lantern, level 6
• Square: An adventure · Why it is there: A journey, a map, something at stake. · A free story that fits: Aladdin, level 11
• Square: Water: a sea, a river or a pond · Why it is there: A setting that changes a story: things float, sink and wash up. · A free story that fits: Duck Says Sorry, level 7
• Square: A book about long ago · Why it is there: Life before now, true or made up. · A free story that fits: A Word of Welsh, level 12
• Square: A book with magic in it · Why it is there: The pull of the impossible. · A free story that fits: Beauty and the Beast, level 10
• Square: A book about feelings · Why it is there: Words for what a child feels, and someone else feeling it too. · A free story that fits: Heron Feels Left Out, level 7
• Square: A story at night · Why it is there: Bedtime books count, and the dark is a good setting. · A free story that fits: The Bear Who Could Not Sleep, level 6
• Square: A classic · Why it is there: A story that has lasted, retold at a child's level. · A free story that fits: Goldilocks and the Three Bears, level 5
• Square: A book read aloud to someone · Why it is there: The reader becomes the one reading aloud: to a little brother, a grandparent, the dog. · A free story that fits: Any book

- Square: A book from somewhere else · Why it is there: The library, the school shelf, the book under the bed. Peabody is not the only place books live. · A free story that fits: Any book

The stories in the last column are only examples. On the device, a tap on a square shows every free story that fits it, nearest the reader's level first, so a six-year-old and a twelve-year-old see different books for the same square.

How the lines work

Five in a row is a Bingo: five rows, five columns and two diagonals, twelve lines in all. The free centre sits on four of them (the middle row, the middle column and both diagonals), so a line through the centre needs only four books. That is on purpose: the first Bingo should arrive while the card still feels new.

A full card, all twenty-five, is the finish line, and the certificate prints there and only there. There is no prize at the first line, no ranking against other children, and nothing for being fastest.

Playing it on paper or on a device

- On paper: the printable bingo card has all twenty-five squares written out, with room for the title in each. A pencil is all it needs.
- On a device: Book Bingo works on any browser. The child taps a square first, then a book that fits; one book stamps one square, and a stamped square stays stamped. A mis-tap can be taken off. A book from one of Peabody's kids' lists, a series book, or a book from somewhere else can fill a square too: for the last, a grown-up presses and holds for two seconds and types the title. The child never types.

For practice at matching books to squares, the bingo square finder is a three-box quiz: which square could this story fill?

Making it fit your reader

The card is written for readers from about six to fourteen. For a younger child, let a book read to them count in every square. For an older reader, agree a house rule together ("a book with chapters") and write it at the top of the paper card. The squares stay the same; the books grow with the reader.

Questions parents ask

Does every square need a different book?

That is the spirit of the card, and each time a book is logged it stamps one square. A funny fable about a pet fits three squares, so choosing where to put it is part of the game.

Why no prize for a line?

A prize rewards the fastest, shortest books. The line lighting up, and the card printed for the fridge, are the reward, and a full card earns the certificate.

Does my child need an account?

No. The card runs on any browser under an animal face, not a name, and the paper card needs nothing at all. The stories are in the library, open to anyone.

What if a square has nothing my child likes?

Skip it for now. A Bingo needs only five in a row, and the free centre helps; the hard squares can wait until the card is nearly full.

Free at peabody.kids/guides/reading-bingo-prompts