ESL reading for kids

Peabody · checked 2026-11-07

ESL reading for kids starts with leveled readers. Peabody's level 0 books are for a child who cannot read yet, with a picture on every page, and levels 1 to 5 are books a child can sound out. A level measures how hard the reading is, not the child's age. All free.

Leveled English readers for learners

- What: Books you can sound out · What a child does: Free picture books from level 0 up, the easiest first, in the English wing of the library. · Ages: 4 to 10
- What: Beginning reader books · What a child does: Short books with few words a page, for the first months of reading. · Ages: 4 to 8
- What: Decodable readers · What a child does: Books made only of sounds a child has been taught, so every word can be sounded out. · Ages: 4 to 8
- What: Sight word stories · What a child does: Stories that repeat the small words children meet most, such as the, said and was. · Ages: 5 to 9
- What: Sight word checklist · What a child does: A checklist of the common words, to tick off as a child learns each one. · Ages: 5 to 9
- What: The library · What a child does: Free stories by reading level, to read alone or aloud, with no account. · Ages: 6 to 12

What "level" means for a child who does not speak English yet

Peabody's levels run from 0 to 18. Level 0 is for a child who cannot read yet: pictures and a word or two a page. Levels 1 to 5 are books a child can sound out. The levels measure how hard the reading is, not how old the child is, so a 9 year old new to English can begin at level 0 and move up as fast as they like.

The first levels use short words of the kind a child can sound out, such as cat, hat and bag, and keep every page short with a picture on it. The readers' wing lists them easiest first, with a count of books at each level.

Reading in the right order

Listen first, then sound out, then read for meaning. Read the first book aloud to your child while they follow the pictures. Next time, ask them to find a word. Then let them read it back to you. Add the flashcards for the words in the book and the second reading is easier.

Everything here is free, with no ads, no sign-up and nothing to download. Nothing about your child is sent anywhere.

Questions parents ask

What English books can my child read if they are just starting?

Level 0 and 1 in the readers' wing: a picture on every page and very few words, free to read on a screen.

Are the books read aloud?

The picture cards say every word aloud, and Peabody TV plays library books as read-along shows. Reading a book aloud yourself, while your child follows the pictures, works well too.

What is a decodable reader?

A book made only of letter sounds the child has already been taught, so every word can be sounded out rather than guessed. See decodable readers.

What is the difference between a level and an age?

A level is how hard the reading is. An older child new to English starts at a low level and moves up, so the books are never for babies by design, just easy to read.

Free at peabody.kids/english/esl-reading-for-kids