

Bedtime stories about fairy tales.

5 stories to read aloud at bedtime, each with its own picture and a calm, sleepy ending. Written for ages 3 to 8.



Goldilocks and the Three Bears

about 3 min

The Elves and the Shoemaker

about 3 min

The Princess and the Pea

about 3 min

The Little Cygnet

about 3 min

The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse

about 3 min

Reading times assume a slow bedtime pace of about 110 words a minute. Every story is also free to read online at pimlo.app/bedtime-stories/fairy-tales.



Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Once upon a time, three bears lived in a little cottage in the wood: Father Bear, Mother Bear and Baby Bear. One morning, Mother Bear made porridge, but it was too hot to eat. "Let's go for a walk while it cools," said Father Bear. So off they went, and they left the door open behind them.

Soon a girl called Goldilocks came skipping through the wood. She saw the open door and peeked inside. On the table were three bowls of porridge. She tasted the big bowl: too hot. She tasted the middle bowl: too cold. She tasted the little bowl, and it was just right, so she ate it all up. Then she tried the chairs. The big chair was too hard, the middle chair was too soft, and the little chair was just right, until it wobbled and one leg came loose.

Goldilocks was tired now, so she went upstairs. The big bed was too high, and the middle bed was too lumpy, but the little bed was just right. She curled up and fell fast asleep. When the bears came home, they saw the empty bowl and the wobbly chair. They tiptoed upstairs, and Baby Bear whispered, "Someone's sleeping in my bed!"

Goldilocks woke up and saw three bears looking at her. Her cheeks went pink. "I'm sorry," she said. "I ate your porridge and broke your chair, and I should have knocked." Baby Bear thought about it. "You can help me fix the chair," he said. So

Goldilocks held the leg steady while Father Bear tapped it back in place, and Mother Bear made a fresh pot of porridge for everyone.

Then Goldilocks walked home through the wood, and the bears waved from their door. That night, Baby Bear sat in his mended chair, ate a little bowl of porridge that was just right, and climbed into his little bed. It was still a tiny bit warm. And he fell asleep, just right.

The end. Goodnight.



The Elves and the Shoemaker

Once upon a time, there was a shoemaker who worked very hard, but he and his wife were poor. One evening, he had only enough leather left for one last pair of shoes. He cut out the pieces, laid them on his workbench, and went up to bed, too tired to sew them that night.

In the morning, he came downstairs and could hardly believe his eyes. There on the bench stood a pair of finished shoes, so neat and fine that every stitch was perfect. A lady came into the shop that very morning and bought them for a good price. With the money, the shoemaker bought leather for two more pairs. He cut them out and left them on the bench, and in the morning, they were finished too.

Night after night, it happened again. "Who could be helping us?" said his wife. So one evening, they hid behind the curtain and watched. At midnight, two tiny elves climbed in through the window. They had no shoes and no coats, only little scraps of cloth. They sat at the bench and sewed and hammered, quick and quiet, until all the shoes were done. Then they slipped away into the night.

"They've helped us so much," said the shoemaker's wife, "and they have nothing warm to wear." So she sewed two tiny shirts, two tiny coats and two pairs of tiny trousers, and the shoemaker made two pairs of tiny shoes. That night, they laid the presents on the bench instead of leather.

At midnight, the elves came in and found the little clothes. They put them on, buttoned their coats, laced their shoes and danced around the workshop with joy. Then they waved and skipped out into the night, warm at last. The shoemaker and his wife smiled at each other and went up to bed, and the little shop was quiet and happy, all night long.

The end. Goodnight.



The Princess and the Pea

Once upon a time, there was a prince who wanted to marry a real princess. He traveled all over the world to find one, but there was always something not quite right. So he came home again, a little sad, and sat by the fire with his mother, the queen.

One evening, there was a terrible storm. The wind howled and the rain poured down. Suddenly, someone knocked at the castle gate. The king went to open it, and there stood a girl, soaking wet from her hair to her shoes. Water ran out of her sleeves. "I'm a princess," she said, shivering, "and I'm lost in the storm. May I come in?"

"We'll soon see if she's a real princess," thought the queen. She didn't say a word, but she went to the guest room and took all the bedding off the bed. On the bare bed she put one small, green pea. Then she piled twenty mattresses on top of the pea, and twenty feather quilts on top of the mattresses. The princess had to climb a ladder to get into bed.

In the morning, the queen asked how she had slept. "Oh, hardly at all!" said the princess, yawning. "There was something hard in the bed, and I tossed and turned all night." Then everyone knew she was a real princess, because only a real princess could feel a pea through twenty mattresses and twenty feather quilts.

The prince was delighted, and he and the princess became the best of friends. The pea was put in the castle museum, where you can see it still, if no one has taken it. And that night, the princess slept in a bed with just one mattress, one quilt and no pea at all. She stretched out, sighed happily, and slept all the way until morning.

The end. Goodnight.



The Little Cygnet

Once upon a time, beside a quiet pond, a mother duck sat on her eggs. One by one, they cracked open, and out came little yellow ducklings, peep, peep. But the last egg was bigger than the rest. When it finally hatched, out came a duckling who was large and gray, with big feet and a long neck.

"You look different," said his brothers and sisters, and they swam off without him. The gray duckling tried to quack like them and waddle like them, but he was always a little too big and a little too slow. He felt as if he didn't quite belong anywhere. So when autumn came, he set off on his own to find somewhere he did.

Winter was long and quiet. The gray duckling found a sheltered place among the tall reeds at the edge of a lake. Snow fell softly on the water. He tucked his head under his wing and waited. Sometimes, high in the sky, he saw great white birds flying past, and he watched them until they disappeared, wishing he could fly with them.

At last, the spring came. The ice melted and the reeds turned green. The gray duckling stretched his wings, and they were bigger and stronger than ever. He glided out onto the lake, where three of the great white birds were swimming. He looked down into the still water, and there, looking back at him, was not a gray duckling at all, but a beautiful white swan.

"There you are," said the swans, and they swam up beside him. "We've been waiting for you." He had been a swan all along; he just hadn't grown into it yet. That evening, the young swan rested with his new family among the reeds, his neck curled against his feathers, the water lapping gently. He had found where he belonged, and he slept peacefully all night.

The end. Goodnight.



The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse

Once upon a time, a little country mouse lived under the roots of an oak tree at the edge of a wheat field. Her home was small and simple, with a bed of soft dry grass and a store of seeds and berries. One day, her cousin, the town mouse, came to visit. The country mouse gave her the best seeds and the sweetest berries she had.

The town mouse nibbled politely. "Cousin," she said, "this is very nice, but you should see how I live. Come back to town with me, and I'll show you a real feast." So the next day, the two mice set off together, along the lanes and over the bridge and into the busy town.

The town mouse lived in a grand house, behind the wall of a dining room. That evening, when the people had finished their dinner, the two mice crept out onto the table. There were crumbs of cake and cheese, a piece of pie and a whole bowl of grapes. The country mouse had never seen so much food. She took a bite of cheese, then a bite of cake.

Then, bang! The door flew open. Footsteps thumped across the floor and a dog barked. The two mice scampered back behind the wall, their hearts pounding. When it was quiet, they crept out again, but soon the door banged a second time, and back they ran. All evening it went on like that, nibble and run, nibble and run.

In the morning, the country mouse said, "Thank you, cousin. Your food is grand, but I like my quiet home better." She walked back along the lanes, over the bridge and through the wheat to her oak tree. That night, she ate a few seeds and a berry, curled up in her bed of soft dry grass and listened to the wind in the wheat. It was simple and quiet, and it was just right. And she fell asleep.

The end. Goodnight.