

Bedtime stories about penguins.

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



The Chick Who Knew the Call

about 3 min

The Smoothest Stone

about 3 min

Little Flip and the Sky Lights

about 2 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/penguins.



The Chick Who Knew the Call

On the ice, there were thousands of penguins. They all had black backs and white tummies. They all waddled and shuffled and huddled. To anyone else, they all looked exactly the same.

Wisp was a fluffy gray chick, waiting in the crèche, the big group where the chicks huddle together while their parents go fishing. As the sun went down, the grown-ups began to come back from the sea, hundreds of them at once, all calling.

Wisp listened. There was a deep call, like a trumpet. That wasn't hers. There was a high, wobbly call. That wasn't hers either. There was a call that went up and down, like a song. Not that one.

Then, from far across the ice, she heard it: two short notes and one long one, a little bit scratchy at the end. Wisp knew it straight away. It was her mother. Every penguin family has its own call, and Wisp had known this one since before she hatched.

Wisp called back with her own small squeak, and waddled as fast as her little legs would go. Her mother bent down and tucked her under her warm tummy, out of the wind. Wisp snuggled into the soft feathers and closed her eyes. Of all the thousands of penguins on the ice, this was the only one who sounded like home.

The end. Goodnight.



The Smoothest Stone

Every evening, the penguins on Stony Beach gathered by the big rock, and everyone brought a stone. Penguins love stones. They build their nests with them, and the smoothest stones are the most special of all.

Wobble was a young penguin, and tonight he wanted to bring the smoothest stone on the whole beach. He waddled along the shore, looking. Here was a gray stone, but it was rough. Here was a white stone, but it had a sharp edge.

At last, right at the edge of the water, he found it: a small, round, black stone, polished so smooth by the waves that it shone like a drop of night. Wobble picked it up in his beak, very proudly, and waddled back toward the big rock.

On the way, he passed old Mrs. Feathers, who was building her nest all alone. Her nest was very small, with only a few stones. She was too slow, now, to waddle all the way down to the water.

Wobble stopped. He looked at his beautiful stone. Then he set it gently in Mrs. Feathers' nest. "For you," he said. Mrs. Feathers ruffled her feathers happily and settled down on it. Wobble went to the gathering with no stone at all, but he didn't mind. He huddled with the others by the big rock, and fell asleep feeling warm all the way through.

The end. Goodnight.



Little Flip and the Sky Lights

Little Flip had heard about the sky lights. "Sometimes, on a clear night," his grandfather told him, "the sky turns green and pink, and the colors dance." Little Flip wanted to see them more than anything.

So one clear, cold evening, Grandpa Flip and Little Flip waddled to the top of a snowy hill, away from the noisy colony. They huddled together, Little Flip tucked against his grandfather's warm side, and they waited.

The sky turned from blue to dark blue to black. The stars came out, one by one, then all at once. The snow sparkled under them. It was very quiet, except for the soft sound of the sea far below.

Then, slowly, a pale green ribbon of light appeared across the sky. It rippled, like a curtain in the wind. Then came another ribbon, pink this time, and they swayed together, slow and silent, above the ice. "Oh," breathed Little Flip. "Oh, Grandpa."

They watched until the lights faded and Little Flip's eyes grew heavy. Grandpa Flip led him back down the hill and tucked him in among the family huddle, warm and close. Little Flip fell asleep with green and pink lights still dancing behind his eyes.

The end. Goodnight.