

timberdoodle

First Grade Handbook



Curriculum Handbook | 2025-2026

NONRELIGIOUS EDITION

Contents

Get Started

5	Meet Your Handbook
6	Tips & Tricks
7	Why Use a Weekly Checklist?
8	Meet Your Online Schedule Customizer
10	Your Annual Planner
12	What Is a Lesson?
14	Sample Weekly Checklists
18	Introducing the Reading Challenge
20	A Fun Beginning-of-the-Year Interview

Item-by-Item Introductions

22	Language Arts
28	Mathematics
31	Thinking Skills
37	History & Social Studies
39	Geography
42	Science
45	STEM Learning
48	Emotional Intelligence
50	Art
55	Learning Tools

Further Resources

59	Playing Imagidice
61	Plus-Plus Excursion Challenges

The Reading Challenge

101	Reading Challenge Questions & Answers
104	Tracking Your Reading Challenge
106	36 Weeks of Reading Challenges
178	Book Awards & Party

When You're Done

181	Have an Amazing School Year!
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Get Started

Meet Your Handbook

Simple Is Better

1. Planning Your Year

Begin with essential tools like the annual planner and sample weekly checklists, which are the foundation of Timberdoodle's curriculum kits.

2. Kit Introductions

Explore brief overviews of each kit item, including its purpose, learning goals, and teaching tips to simplify your school year.

3. Activity Ideas

Discover resources such as game ideas for Imagidice and creative ways to use Plus-Plus models.

4. Reading Challenge

Track your child's reading with a log that encourages variety, featuring hundreds of book suggestions for inspiration.

Curriculum Levels Explained

Timberdoodle kits come in Basic, Complete, and Elite options, allowing you to choose based on your child's needs, schedule, and budget. This guide offers overviews and teaching tips for every item in the Elite kit. If you have a Basic, Complete, or customized kit, just focus on the items in your selection.



Photo: The Liwanag Family in Chester, New York

Tips & Tricks

Starting Your Homeschool Year

Find Your Flow

The first week might feel bumpy, but that's normal! Most families using the Timberdoodle First-Grade Kit settle into a rhythm within a few weeks, spending 1–3 hours daily, depending on their schedule.

Plan Your Day

Some kids prefer to finish bookwork first and save the fun activities for later, while others thrive by mixing in STEM, art, and thinking games. Find what works best—there's no right or wrong approach!

Set a Schedule

Focus on practicing core subjects like math, phonics, and spelling daily. Tackle history and science in a single session each to simplify your life. For courses you don't need as often, plan for them weekly or monthly, or save them for summer fun!

Check State Requirements

Visit hslsda.org/laws for your state's homeschool rules. Weekly checklists and work samples usually meet most requirements, but some states may require subjects like P.E. or state history.

Include P.E. and Health

Make P.E. fun with activities your child enjoys—like swimming, soccer, or dance. Many science programs also cover health topics.

Use Your Checklist

The weekly checklist helps keep things organized. Check off tasks as you complete them, and cross out anything you don't need to do that week.

Balance Hard and Easy Days

If your child struggles, start with something fun, like art or reading. Teach him how to work through challenges but also allow breaks when needed.

Sample Schedules

Use the sample annual and weekly planners (starting on page 10) as a starting point, then adjust them to fit your family's needs. You've got this!

Should
I Join a
Homeschool
Group?



Why Use a Weekly Checklist?

Flexibility and Structure Unite

Starting homeschooling can feel overwhelming. How do you know you're doing enough? Your Timberdoodle kit gives structure, but here's how to simplify it.

Without a plan, it's easy to start randomly, quit when things get hard, and feel lost. But overscheduling your day with rigid time slots can be just as stressful—life happens, and interruptions can derail everything.

The solution is a flexible structure. Instead of strict schedules, use Timberdoodle's checklist system and time blocks. Plan key activities like lessons, independent work, reading, outdoor time, and chores. Let your routine adapt to your family's natural flow.

Track tasks with checklists. Your child can check progress as he goes, whether on paper or online.

Every week will be different. Focus on core subjects—language arts, math, and thinking skills—while adjusting others as needed. Real-life experiences like outdoor play or helping siblings also count as learning. The goal is not perfection but finding a rhythm that works for your family. Celebrate the wins, adjust as needed, and enjoy the journey!

Why
Timberdoodle
Encourages
Independent
Learning



Photo: The Johanson Family

Meet Your Online Schedule Customizer

Getting the Most Out of Your Planner

Use the Schedule Customizer

Launch your homeschooling plan using the online Schedule Customizer included with your kit. It allows you to adjust school days, customize your schedule, print personalized checklists, and even log your progress!

First Time? Activate Your Account

- Log in to schedule.timberdoodle.com to easily access your kit if you ordered it from our website.
- If you ordered elsewhere or need to activate a different email, use the activation code inside the front cover of this handbook, plus your order number, to activate your account.

Things to Decide before You Start

- How many weeks will you do school? Thirty-six school weeks plus 4 weeks of breaks is standard. You can shorten this or extend it year-round to accommodate sports, activities, or preferences.
- When will you start? Any day works—you don't need to match the local school calendar.
- What breaks do you want? Thanksgiving, Christmas, spring break, or custom breaks for travel or family visits.

Calendar Tips

- Single-day breaks: Most families don't log these but fit the work into the rest of the week.
- School days: Set your schedule to match your needs, like using a 4-day week or doing school on Saturday.

Customize Your Schedule

- Add: You can include Timberdoodle items, books you already have, or custom courses.
- Habits: You can add any habits you want to incorporate into your schedule, such as reading, music practice, or taking a walk.
- Edit schedules: You can fine-tune your schedule to reflect your preferences and plans. See a few options on the following page.

Celebrated Feature

One of the most appreciated features of our Schedule Customizer is the ability to easily see what you skipped in previous weeks. This celebrated tool has made catching up simpler and more efficient for countless users, helping you stay on track with ease!

Want to make your checklist even more customized to your plans and schedule? Read on!

Exclude Items

You can skip specific items during certain weeks. For example:

- Save an art kit for a May trip.
- Pause science to prepare for a local fair.

Front-Load vs. Back-Load

Decide how to handle extra lessons (e.g., 40 lessons in 36 weeks):

- Front-Load: Finish extra lessons early, which is ideal for easier items like games.
- Back-Load: Save them for later if they build on other skills.
- Default: Lessons are spread evenly throughout the schedule.

Weekly vs. Daily Schedules

Weekly Schedule: Offers flexibility for unexpected events like dentist appointments or robotics camp. This option teaches time management.

Daily Schedule: Great for beginners. Divides work evenly, with extra tasks at the start of the week to avoid end-of-week burnout.

For daily schedules, you can fine-tune by selecting which days a course appears. For example:

- Schedule history on co-op day (Wednesday).
- Alternate science and STEM to avoid overlap.

Finalize Your Schedule

- Review your schedule summary.
- Click "Save & Continue" to complete.
- Access Your Dashboard: Click "Checklist" to log progress or print.

Printed Checklists

- Print weekly or daily checklists.
- Choose whether to include unit range reminders (e.g., "pages 50-56").
- Use the large-font version for easier reading.
- Try it for a few weeks before printing an entire year to ensure it works for you.

Track Progress Online

Alternatively, log completed work in the "Progress" section of the Schedule Customizer. Watch progress bars fill up for a visual representation of your achievements throughout the year.

With these tools, you can easily tailor and manage your homeschool schedule!

Access Your
Schedule
Customizer



Your Annual Planner

Curriculum	Lesson or Pages	= Per Week
Language Arts		
All About Reading, Level 2	53 lessons	20 minutes a day
Daily 6-Trait Writing, Grade 1	25 weeks	1 week’s work
Spelling You See, Level B	36 weeks	10 minutes a day
Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright!	365 poems	5 poems
Imagidice	unlimited	once a week
Math		
Thinking Skills		
		1-2 spreads
History & Social Studies		
		1-2 chapters

Sample Weekly Checklist

Elite

Curriculum

This Week

Check It Off!

Language Arts

All About Reading, Level 2	20 minutes a day
Daily 6-Trait Writing, Grade 1	1 week’s work
Spelling You See, Level B	10 minutes a day
Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright!	5 poems
Imagidice	once a week

Math

Thinking Skills

History & Social Studies

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Introducing the Reading Challenge

First Grade: Ancient History and STEM

The Reading Challenge encourages your child to explore a wide variety of books while covering key topics.

With 36 weekly themes, you can pick books from your library, dive into multiple selections, or adapt the pace to suit your week. At this grade level, your child might read some books independently while you enjoy others together. Don't rush to skip reading time together—it's beneficial even after your child becomes a confident reader.

Why Read Together?

Reading to children isn't just enjoyable; it's incredibly valuable. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) highlights 3 key benefits:

1. **Strengthen language skills:** Reading introduces your child to new words, ideas, and emotions. As books become more complex, he'll learn grammar, pronunciation, rhyming, and more.
2. **Build literacy development and interest in reading.** When you read together, your child sees that books are fun and valuable, building a lifelong appreciation for reading.
3. **Create nurturing parent-child relationships:** Reading creates meaningful moments in a busy life. By stepping into stories together, you'll share experiences and build a connection through discussion, wonder, or even shared grief.

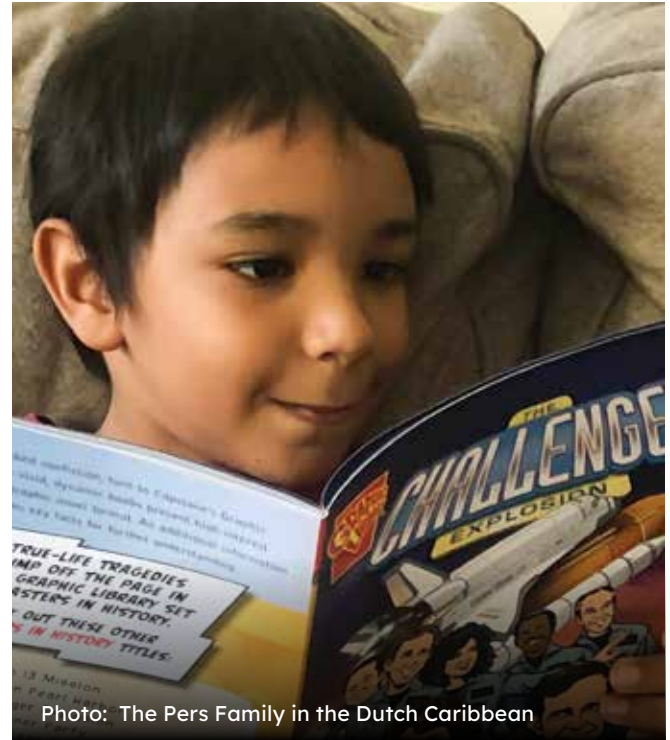


Photo: The Pers Family in the Dutch Caribbean

Emotional Intelligence

Reading expands your child's understanding of emotions and fosters empathy. It's a simple way to teach emotional fluency and compassion for others' perspectives.

How the Reading Challenge Works

Each challenge page (starting on page 106) includes:

- Book Suggestions
- Space to Track What You Read Together
- On page 104, you'll find a progress chart to track your overall challenge.

Set Your Pace

Choose a goal based on your schedule and family dynamics.

- Light Reader: 1 book every 2 weeks (18 books)
- Interested Reader: 1 book per week (36 books)
- Avid Reader: 3 books every 2 weeks (54 books)
- Committed Reader: 2 books per week (72 books)
- Enthralled Reader: 5 books every 2 weeks (90 books)

Pick a pace that feels realistic and enjoyable!

No Idea What to Read?

We've got you covered! Starting on page 106, you'll find thousands of book suggestions for the year or browse more online.

Access Online
Reading
Challenge
Booklist



Need More Ideas?

Ask your local librarian, listen to the Read-Aloud Revival podcast, or explore Timberdoodle's Facebook groups. Don't forget to look at the extra reading suggestions in your history or science textbooks—especially if a recent topic piqued your child's interest.

Reading Levels and Variety

This year's list includes a range of titles perfect for most first-graders. Choose books that fit your child's interests, but also try adding a few outside his usual preferences. For instance, if your child loves graphic novels, include more complex read-aloud books. Exposing your child to diverse literature helps him discover new favorites!

Keeping It Affordable

Reading doesn't have to break the bank. Use library books or free e-books, borrow from friends, or buy used ones. Many libraries also offer free e-books; services like Kindle Unlimited or Everand may have the needed titles.

Flexible Challenges

You don't need to follow the challenges in order! Match seasonal topics with holidays, or let your child dive into his current passion (e.g., reptiles). Feel free to skip or substitute topics to make the experience more relevant or enjoyable for your child.

Let's Get Started!

Pick a plan, select some books with your child, and begin your reading adventure.

Item-by-Item Introductions

Language Arts

Beginning Reading, Writing, Spelling, and Stories

This year, your child will make significant progress in reading, mastering 3-letter blends, silent E rules, new phonograms, and decoding multisyllable words.

Spelling: *Spelling You See* complements *All About Reading* by reinforcing phonics in just 10 minutes a day.

Writing: *6-Trait Writing* develops your child's skills through short, engaging lessons.

Poetry: *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright!* introduces the beauty of poetry and inspires wonder about the world.

Storytelling: Imagidice adds a fun, game-like element to teaching storytelling. Check the handbook for extra gameplay ideas.

Start at the Right Level

Use the *All About Reading* teacher's manual pretest to ensure your child is placed at the best level. If he needs to start at an earlier level, don't worry—building a solid foundation will pay off in the long run.

Make Teaching Easier

Physical letter tiles come included, but many families choose the convenience of the Letter Tiles app. The app automatically configures tiles for each lesson, simplifying setup for you and learning for your child.

You can find the app on Google Play, Apple's App Store, or the Kindle App Store (sold separately).

Why Teaching
Reading May Be
the Best Part of
Homeschooling



All About Reading, Level 2

Basic | Complete | Elite

All About Reading (AAR) Level 2 is a fun, multisensory, mastery-based program that teaches phonics, decoding, fluency, and comprehension. Suitable for all learning styles, AAR introduces one concept at a time and uses a built-in review system to ensure mastery.

The open-and-go lessons are scripted and illustrated, making teaching stress-free. A small amount of prep is required, like cutting flashcards or setting up games, but the lessons are already designed for first-grader-friendly learning.

Your child will enjoy interactive activities like feeding words to an anteater or learning open and closed syllables. The full-color activity books and 2 included phonetic readers add to the fun. These beautifully illustrated readers feature hilarious, engaging stories, like Fox's stunts and Rawhide the ranch dog's misadventures.

Level 2 builds systematically on Level 1, introducing new skills with hands-on activities and 27 decodable stories with comprehension exercises.



Scheduling

With 54 lessons, you might aim for 1.5 weekly lessons, but AAR recommends tailoring the pace to your child. Spend about 20 minutes daily, progressing faster on easier days and taking extra time when needed.

Daily 6-Trait Writing, Grade 1

Basic | **Complete** | **Elite**

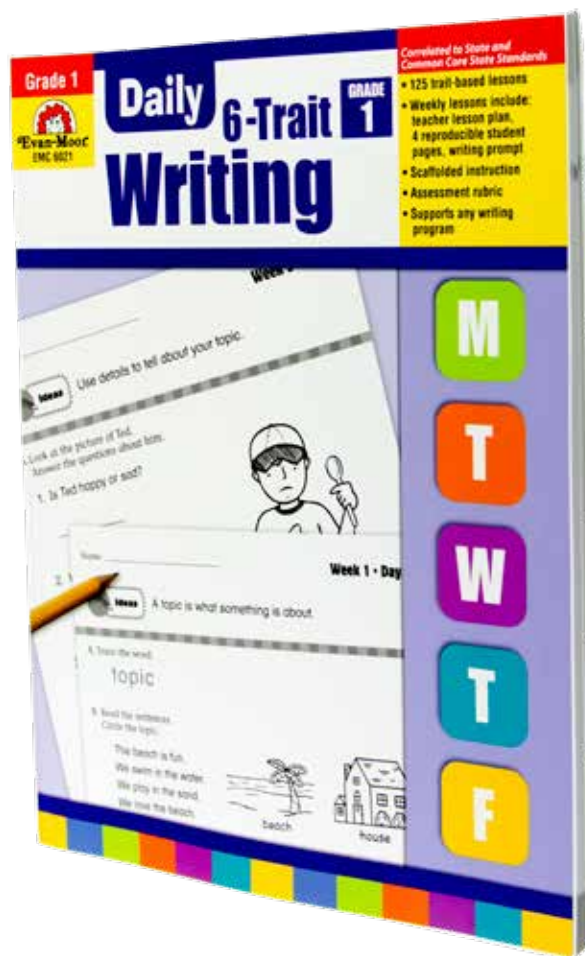
Are you familiar with trait writing? Educators use a proven method to assess writing quality based on 1 key traits: content, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, voice, and conventions (grammar, spelling, and mechanics).

Daily 6-Trait Writing simplifies this process with short, effective assignments designed to build skills without overwhelming your student. We love its combination of brevity and thoroughness!

Scheduling

This program includes 25 weeks of lessons, ideal for 1 short session per day starting in week 12. If you begin later, you can use the extra pages for summer review to keep your child's skills sharp.

For a student with developing motor skills, consider separating writing from motor tasks. Allow dictation, use a whiteboard, or introduce typing tools to help him focus on writing skills while his motor abilities improve.



Spelling You See, Level B

Basic | Complete | Elite

This multisensory spelling program helps your child become a confident speller naturally and at his own pace. Spelling You See focuses on visual memory instead of rote memorization, so there are no spelling lists, tests, or heavy prep work.

Spelling You See: Jack and Jill uses nursery rhymes to build phonemic awareness and fluency. Dictation enhances auditory memory, handwriting, phonics, and spelling, all in 1 activity! Keep lessons short—10 minutes max—to match a first-grader's attention span.

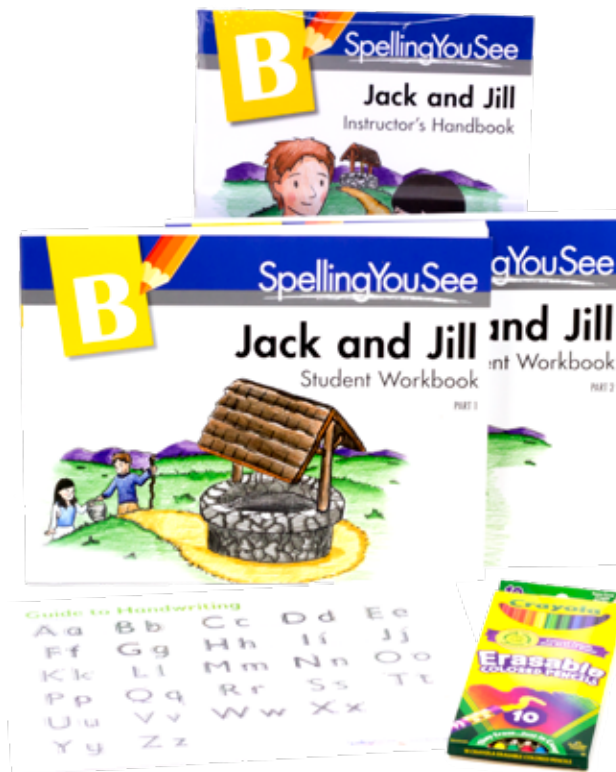
Scheduling

The 36-week program includes 5 daily activities each week, ready to go with no prep needed.

Pro Tip

Limit spelling to 10 minutes daily. Fast writers will have plenty to do, while slower writers won't feel overwhelmed. Use a timer and move to the next day's lesson when it rings—no need to finish every part of the current one.

For a 4-day schedule, simply complete the first 4 days of work and skip the fifth. While it may feel odd to leave a page unfinished, the course will work best with this flexible approach.



Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright!

Basic | Complete | **Elite**



If your child usually skips poetry, *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright!* might change his mind. This beautifully illustrated collection features animal-themed poems spanning 400 years and 22 countries, offering a mix of classics, contemporary works, silly rhymes, and profound verses.

With 365 poems, it's perfect for daily enjoyment, though the real challenge might be stopping at just one! This anthology celebrates the wonder of the animal kingdom and is a treasure for any homeschool family.

Scheduling

Read 1 poem daily or 1-2 poems per school day to enjoy poetry without feeling overwhelmed.

Imagidice

Basic | Complete | **Elite**

Educators have used Imagidice for years to boost vocabulary, imagination, and creative problem-solving. Each of the 12 dice features 6 images, totaling 72 unique icons. Roll some or all the dice, then use the resulting images to create a story.

Telling stories aloud lets kids unleash creativity without worrying about writing or spelling. Beyond storytelling, Imagidice can break the ice at parties, enhance foreign language skills, and improve expressive and receptive language abilities in a fun way.

Keep it simple by rolling 1 die and asking your child to describe the image, or challenge him with multiple dice to find connections between pictures. The icons' open-ended nature sparks creativity, as interpretations can vary widely based on experiences and imagination.

The durable cubes feature etched and painted designs, ensuring long-lasting fun. Families who prefer to exclude specific images, like ghosts or witches, can easily remove a die from the set.

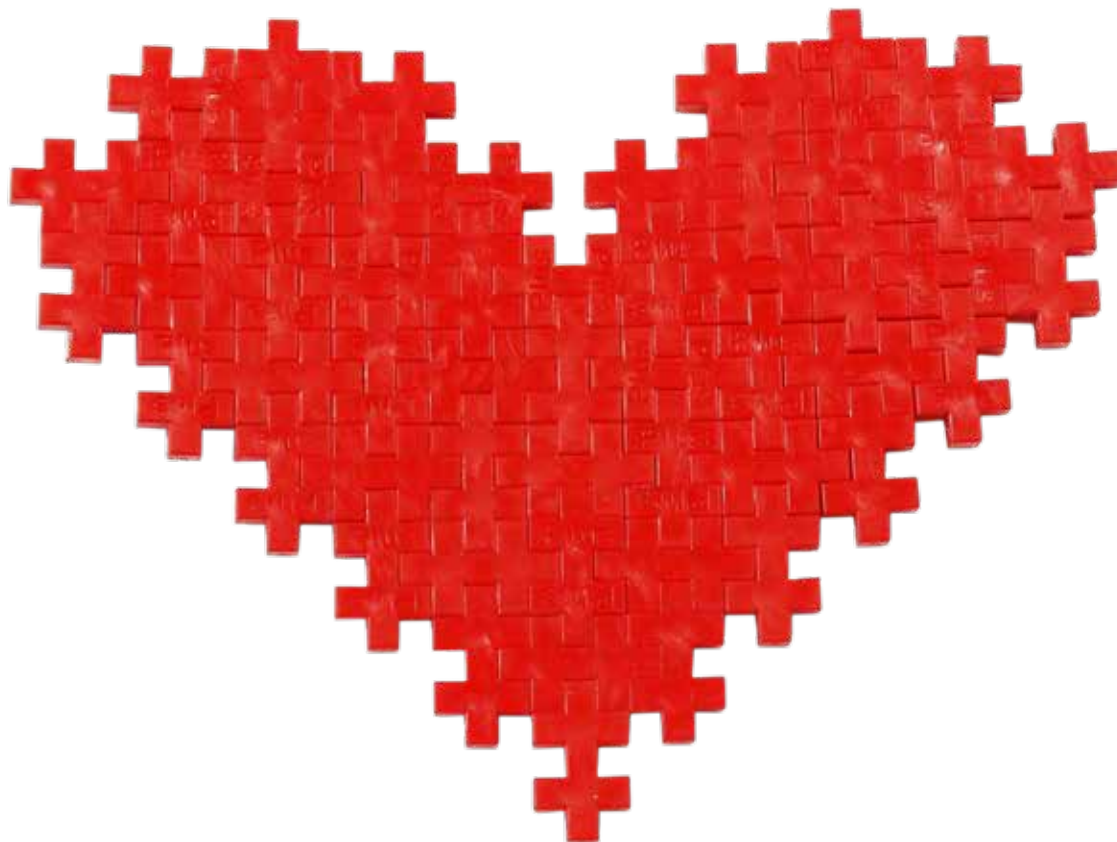
Scheduling

Play at least once a week. For new ideas, check out page 59 or explore options online.



Further Resources

Model 1: Heart



The Reading Challenge

Reading Challenge Questions & Answers

Practical Details to Set Up a Productive Routine

Are you excited about the reading challenge but need a jumpstart? You're in the right place!

These book suggestions are just a starting point—feel free to customize and find what works best for your family. There are hundreds of great options, so use this as inspiration, not a rulebook!

Will the Same Books Repeat?

Some books may appear more than once, but not often. Each grade has its own book list, and about 25% of titles appear in multiple grades when they align with different challenges. Many books could fit multiple categories within a grade, but we list each book only once to keep things simple. If you want to read more from a challenge, check the list—you'll likely find another category where it fits!

A Mix of Reading Levels

Some books are for reading aloud, while our child will read others independently. Reading aloud builds literacy, language, and a love for stories, sparking the desire to read.

Access Online
Reading
Challenge
Booklist



Photo: The Coulter Family in New Jersey

Paleontology

Challenge 1

The Book You Chose	Date Completed
1.1 <i>Light Reader</i>	
1.2 <i>Interested Reader</i>	
1.3 <i>Avid Reader</i>	
1.4 <i>Committed Reader</i>	
1.5 <i>Enthralled Reader</i>	

After the Dinosaurs: Mammoths and Fossil Mammals by Charlotte Lewis Brown (I Can Read)
The Berenstain Bears and the Missing Dinosaur Bone by Stan and Jan Berenstain (Beginner Books)
The Berenstain Bears’ Dinosaur Dig by Jan and Mike Berenstain
The Big Dinosaur Dig by Esther Ripley (DK Readers)
Bones, Bones, Dinosaur Bones by Byron Barton
Buried in the Backyard by Gail Herman (Science Solves It)
Colossal Fossil by Ron Roy (A to Z Mysteries)
Curious about Fossils by Kate Waters (Smithsonian)
Digging Up Dinosaurs by Aliki (Let’s Read and Find Out)
Dinosaur Alert! by Carolyn Keene (Nancy Drew Notebooks)
Dinosaur Babies by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld (Let’s Read and Find Out)
Dinosaur Bones by Aliki (Let’s Read and Find Out)
Dinosaur Detectives by Peter Chrisp (DK Readers)

Dinosaur Detectives by Judith Bauer Stamper (The Magic School Bus Chapter Book)
Dinosaur Eggs by Jennifer Dussling (Penguin Young Readers)
Dinosaur Hunter by Elaine Marie Alphin (I Can Read)
Dinosaur Hunters by Kate McMullan (Step Into Reading)
Dinosaur Lady: The Daring Discoveries of Mary Anning, the First Paleontologist by Linda Skeers
The Dinosaur Mystery by Gertrude Chandler Warner (The Boxcar Children)
A Dinosaur Named Sue: The Find of the Century by Fay Robinson (Scholastic Reader)
Dinosaur Tracks by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld (Let’s Read and Find Out)
Dinosaurs: 400 Words for Budding Paleontologists by Ellen-Therese Lamm (Merriam-Webster’s Talk Like an Expert)

Dinosaurs and Other Prehistoric Creatures by Douglas Palmer (Discovery Plus)

Dinosaurs Are Different by Alikei (Let's Read and Find Out)

Dinosaurs Discovered by Dean R. Lomax (DK Readers)

Discovery in the Cave by Mark Dubowski (Step Into Reading)

The Dog That Dug for Dinosaurs by Shirley Raye Redmond (Ready to Read)

The Extinct Alphabet Book by Jerry Pallotta

Finding the First T. Rex: How a Giant Meat-Eater was Dug Up by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld (Totally True Adventures)

Fossil Fever by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld (Stepping Stones)

Fossil Frenzy by Franklin W. Dixon (The Hardy Boys Secret Files)

Fossil Huntress: Mary Leakey, Paleontologist by Andi Diehn (Picture Book Biography)

Fossils for Kids: A Junior Scientist's Guide to Dinosaur Bones, Ancient Animals, and Prehistoric Life on Earth by Ashley Hall

Fossils for Kids: Finding, Identifying, and Collecting: An Introduction to Paleontology by Dan R. Lynch

Fossils Tell of Long Ago by Alikei (Let's Read and Find Out)

How Big Were Dinosaurs? by Lita Judge

If You Were a Kid Discovering Dinosaurs by Josh Gregory

Ivy and Bean Break the Fossil Record by Annie Barrows

Little Leonardo's Fascinating World of Paleontology by Jeff Bond

The Magic School Bus in the Time of the Dinosaurs by Joanna Cole

Maxed Out! Gigantic Creatures from the Past by Ginjer L. Clarke (Penguin Young Readers)

Mister Bones: Dinosaur Hunter by Jane Kurtz (Ready to Read)

My Visit to the Dinosaurs by Alikei (Let's Read and Find Out)

The Mystery of the Dinosaur Bones by David A. Adler (Cam Jansen)

The Mystery of the Stolen Dinosaur Bones by Gertrude Chandler Warner (The Boxcar Children)

Prehistoric Life by Richard Kelly (100 Facts)

Raptor Pack by Robert T. Bakker (Step Into Reading)

Saber-Toothed Cat by Harold Rober (Bumba Books: Dinosaurs and Prehistoric Beasts)

Searching for Stinkodon by Megan McDonald (Judy Moody and Friends)

The Secret of Bigfoot Valley by Gertrude Chandler Warner (The Boxcar Children)

The Talking T. Rex by Ron Roy (A to Z Mysteries)

What Happened to the Dinosaurs? by Franklyn M. Branley (Let's Read and Find Out)

Wild and Woolly Mammoths by Alikei

Woolly Mammoth by Alikei (Bumba Books: Dinosaurs and Prehistoric Beasts)

You Can Be a Paleontologist: Discovering Dinosaurs with Dr. Scott by Scott Sampson (National Geographic Kids)

**When You're
Done**

Have an Amazing School Year!

You're Going to Make Some Epic Memories

At Timberdoodle, our goal is to make your homeschooling experience both effective and enjoyable.

If you have any questions about your curriculum kit or about homeschooling, please reach out—we'd love to help!

Email: mail@timberdoodle.com

Call: 800-478-0672

Live Chat: timberdoodle.com

Ready to share your experience with a review? Your insight can help other homeschooling families find the right fit.

From our family to yours,
Timberdoodle

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Review Your 1st
Grade Kit



About
Timberdoodle





<- Meet Timberdoodle

Need help getting started? Our team is standing by and eager to assist!



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