

Want your kids to read more? Amazon has a new Kindle for them

October 8 2019, by Edward C. Baig, Usa Today



Your kids love electronics. You'd love it if they'd read more. Amazon hopes to meet you both in the middle with a new Kindle for the young e-readers in the family.

The company is launching a \$109.99 Kindle Kids Edition, which it describes as a first-ever dedicated reading experience built just for kids.

Preorders begin today.

Featuring a 6-inch (167 ppi) e-ink display and adjustable front light, the hardware is identical to the entry-level Kindle Amazon that sells for \$20 less, meaning it does a very good job of replicating the experience of reading on paper.

What parents pay a premium for then is a bundle that includes a special kid-friendly case (blue, pink, rainbow birds or space designs) and wallpapers, a two-year guarantee that Amazon will replace a broken unit you send back for no extra charge, and a one-year subscription to Amazon's FreeTime Unlimited. That's the service that provides access to a selection of curated e-books, all inside a password-protected "walled garden."

(Once the year is up, FreeTime Unlimited fees range from \$2.99 a month for a Prime member with a single child to \$9.99 monthly for a non-Prime family with up to four kids.)

Finding age-appropriate content

More than 2,500 age-appropriate e-books are being made available, including chapter books and titles such as "Island of the Blue Dolphins," "El Deafo" and "Bridge to Terabithia." The environment is ad-free, and Amazon says it won't share reading data with advertisers or third parties.

The company will serve up recommendations of books the kids might like based on characters and themes; kids can search for available content themselves, even if they don't know the precise title or misspell a word—Amazon calls this "fuzzy search." So they might type in "Hary Potter" instead of "Harry," for instance.

Parents have visibility into the kids' reading activity and progress

through a dashboard they can access remotely on a phone, computer or tablet.

The regular Kindle shopping experiences found on the company's other dedicated e-readers are off-limits to the child.

Coming soon are a Spanish-language library and hundreds of audiobooks from Amazon-owned Audible that kids can listen to via Bluetooth headphones or a speaker.

Parents can add other e-books or Audible content they deem appropriate.

For those families that already have Kindles, there's an option that doesn't involve adding yet another device to the home. Through a software update coming in January, parents can convert current and selected previous-generation Kindle e-readers to a kid-friendly reader with the FreeTime interface.

Since FreeTime Unlimited spans an age range from 3 to 12, parents can set filters to surface content that is more relevant for their particular child.

Beyond the Kindle Kids Edition, Amazon announced the expansion of Amazon FreeTime parental controls and FreeTime Unlimited to even more devices, including select Fire TV streaming devices and soon smart TVs, and a new \$199.99 Fire HD 10 Kids Edition tablet that comes with a risk-free two-year guarantee. FreeTime Unlimited on the tablet includes access to more than 20,000 books, Audible books, videos, educational apps and games, along with all of the books available in the Kindle Kids Edition.

Helping the kids become better readers

Some of the features on this new child-friendly Kindle have been around for a few years, but still they might encourage the kids to read more, or at least help them better understand what they're consuming.

The Word Wise feature familiar to some Kindle owners, for example, places simple short definitions in smaller type above somewhat challenging words for a younger reader. Just above the word "bewitched," for instance, is the simple explanation "to use magic on someone." Parents can choose to surface more or fewer Word Wise definitions based on reading level.

If your child looks up a word in the dictionary, it will be added to a Vocabulary Builder where it can be used in flashcards that may help the kid learn.

Kids can earn "achievement badges" based on predefined goals, from an "over-achiever" who exceeds his or her daily goal to a "super book worm" who meets the goals that have been set for seven straight days.

The new Kindle Kids Edition and Fire HD 10 Kids Edition both start shipping Oct. 30; Amazon says for a limited time, people who buy two of the Kindles can save 25%.

As with other Kindles, Amazon is promising battery life that lasts weeks, not mere days, eliminating any excuses the kids might have for not reading because the Kindle ran out of juice.

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