# TaleMate User Manual

Date Updated: 10/29/2026

**What is TaleMate?**

TaleMate is an interactive joint reading app that allows parents and children to assign different voices to the characters from a book. The app provided reading companions with different voice that enact characters, and parent and child read the characters aloud. The app facilitates a theatrical experience for both parent and child through performing a designated character throughout the book.

TaleMate is a research prototype from Virginia Tech (CoDeS, L&D, and EchoLab). It has three books, all from *The Pattern Pals* series.

**Before you start**

Allow about 5 minutes and sit somewhere quiet where you can both see the screen.

1. A tablet or laptop with a recent web browser
2. Speakers with the volume turned up to a comfortable level
3. An internet connection, because the assignable voices are generated online
4. Quiet space with your child next to you

***Do not refresh or reload the page while reading.** TaleMate does not save your progress, so a refresh sends you back to the start.

**Getting started**

1. Open the TaleMate link you were given.
2. On the welcome page, tap or click **Get**  **Started**
3. On the **Welcome!** screen, type your child's first name in the box "What's your child's name?".
4. Tap **Start**.

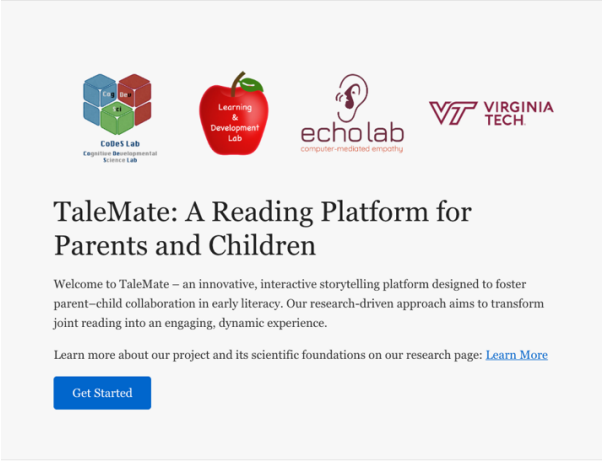



***Image 1:*** *Screenshot of the welcome page with the Get Started button circled*

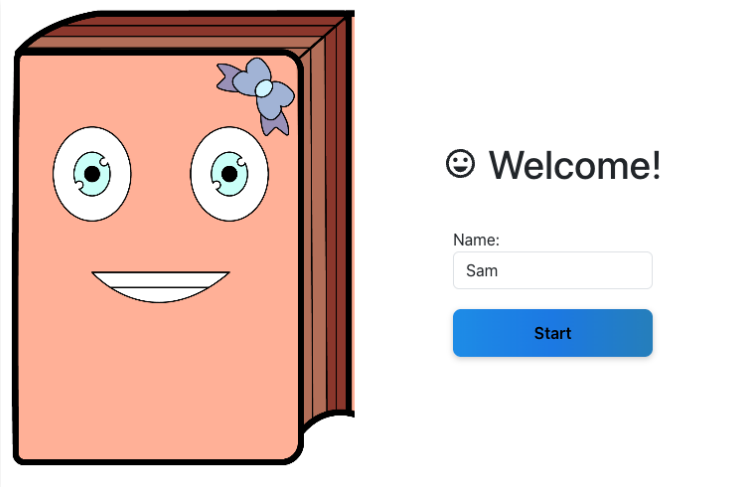



***Image 2:*** *Screenshot of the Welcome screen with a child's name typed in the name box*

**Choose your avatars**

Your child picks first, then you.

1. On **Children Avatar Selection**, let your child tap the picture they like best.
2. On **Parent Avatar Selection**, tap the picture that will stand for you.

The avatars appear later next to the Parent and Child roles, so you can both tell which lines are yours.

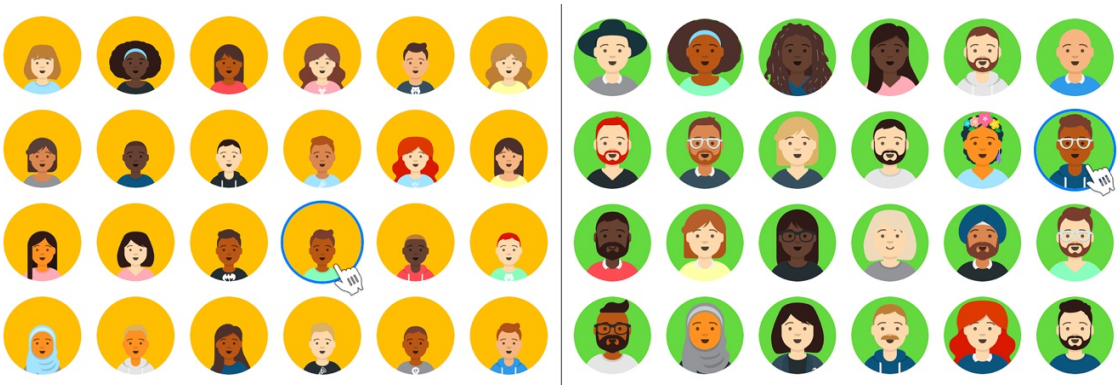


***Image 3:*** *The two avatar screens side by side, each with a selected avatar circled*

**Pick a book**

Choose one of the three books and tap **Start Reading** under its cover.

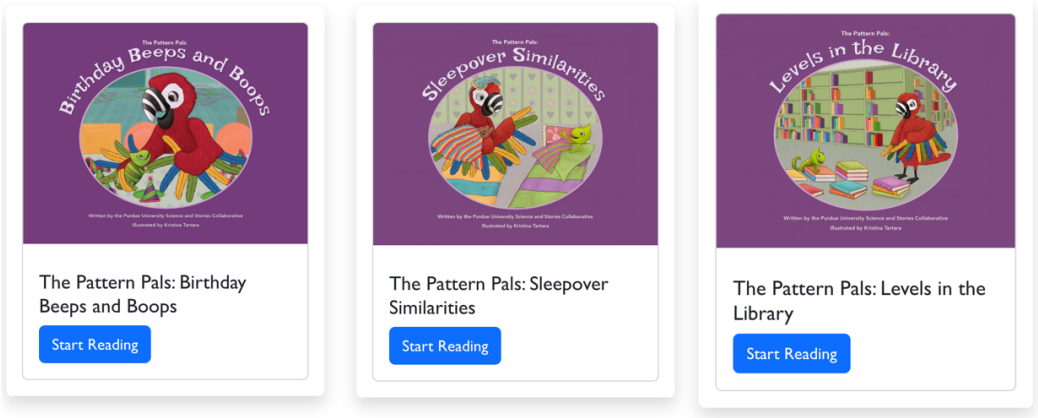



***Image 4:*** *Screenshot of the bookshelf, with the Start Reading button*

**Assign the characters**

Every character in the book needs a role before you can start reading. The **Select a Role** screen lists the eight role cards on the left side and book's characters on the right side.




***Image 5:*** *A screenshot of a character assignment page. Users can drag the role card(1, 2) and assign to a book's character on the right (3)*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1: Parent and child | The parent and child |
| 2: Reading Companions | The app, each in its own voice |

1. Tap the play button ▶ on a role card to hear what that voice sounds like.
2. Drag a role card onto a character 3. The **Parent** and **Child** badges show which characters we suggest for each of you.
3. Repeat until every character has a role. The Narrator usually works best with an app voice.
4. Tap « the arrow at the top right to start the » story. The arrow goes back to the book list.

You will see **"Please assign one role to each character before continuing"**, if a character still has no role. Make sure to assign all roles to characters.

### Reading the story

The story moves forward one line at a time, and the line being read is highlighted. The big button at the bottom right moves the story along. It says **Next**, then **Next Page** at the end of a page, and **End** at the end of the book.

- **App voice line:** the app reads it aloud. Wait for it to finish, then tap **Next**.
- **Parent line:** read it aloud yourself, then tap **Next**.
- **Child line:** your child taps the yellow highlighted line (or presses the space bar) to hear it read first, then reads it aloud. **Next** stays greyed out until they have tapped their line.

On a keyboard, **Enter** does the same as the Next button.

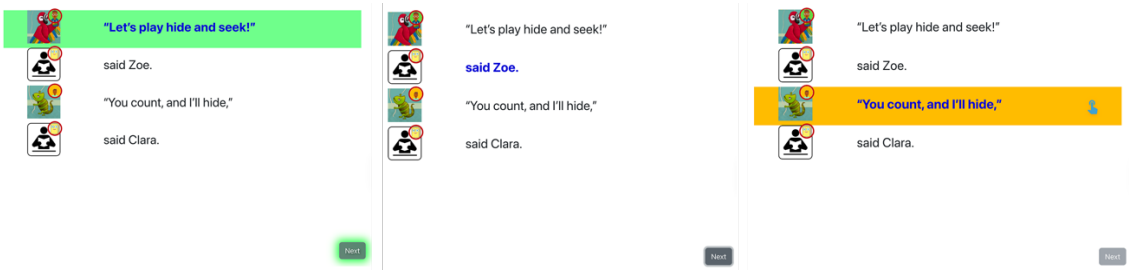



***Image 6:*** *Screenshots of the reader interface, showing the highlighted parent line, the highlighted reading companion's line, and a child line ready to be tapped.*

### Question time

Some pages end with a question about the story. Tap the speaker button or the question itself to hear it read aloud. Then talk about it together before you move on. There is no right answer to type in.

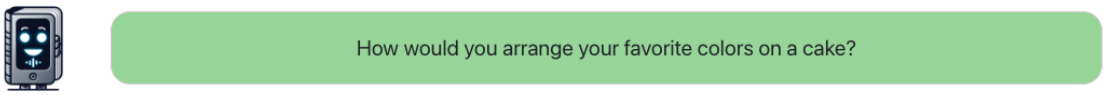



***Image 7:*** *Screenshot of a question bubble. User can click to hear the question.*

**Moving around**

The story bar at the bottom of the page has three buttons:

| Button | What it does |
|---|---|
|  | Goes back to the book list. You'll need to assign roles again. |
|  | Goes to the previous page |
|  | Skips to the next page |

When the big button says **End**, you've finished the book. Tap Home to choose another one.

**Troubleshooting**

| Problem | What to do |
|---|---|
| No sound | Check the device volume and the mute switch, and that headphones are plugged in |
| The voice takes a while to start | Wait a few seconds. The first reading of each line is made on the spot |
| Next is greyed out | It's your child's turn. Tap the highlighted line to hear it first |
| Can't start the story | Every character needs a role. Look for one with no card on it |
| Blank page or error message | The page was probably refreshed. Go back to the TaleMate link and start again |