



# Children's TECHNOLOGY Review™

www.childrenstech.com

March 2011

Volume 19, No. 3, Issue 132

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Vision  
Square of Life  
Steel Diver  
TeachTown: Basics 2.0  
Tetris Link  
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## SETTING UP A

# Multi-Touch Preschool

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- ✓ Security & Safety
- ✓ Apps for each part of the room
- ✓ How to manage iTunes



Notes: a) Wireless Internet access in the classroom is required and not include in price.  
b) An existing computer (Windows or Mac) could substitute for the teacher's MacBook.  
c) iPad price includes protective case.

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**P**icture if you will, your ideal early childhood learning environment, say, in a daycare or a public preschool. Chances are, it is filled with developmentally appropriate materials.

You have blocks, art supplies, room to move around and role play materials. But does your vision include an iPad in each area? In this issue of CTR, we sketch out what such a preschool might look like, complete with base costs, logistical issues and a list of apps to support each learning area. For about \$3000, you can greatly enhance a learning environment. See page 5.

This issue also contains the first wave of 2011 tech toys, including some links to some sites on page 4. In other news, March 2011 will see two exciting new platforms: Nintendo 3DS and the next iPad. Apple has us guessing on the iPad features (on the top of my wish list is a camera, better volume control and a USB or SD). You can see my complete wish list here <http://bit.ly/igunFH>.

### Built from the ground up for augmented reality -- the Nintendo 3DS

Augmented reality (AR) has come up a lot in the past year, as cameras are married with motion detection hardware. Wikipedia defines AR as live direct or an indirect view of a physical, real-world environment whose elements are augmented by computer-generated sensory input. Last week, I spent two hours with the Nintendo 3DS and I think that Augmented Reality just might be Nintendo's secret weapon for keeping a step ahead of the competition. I provide more details, here <http://bit.ly/f4Px9>.



### This iPad Holder Runs Windows

Windows users who have been looking for fast, reliable, virus-free video now have a solution. The iPad Holder comes just in the nick of time, before the iPad 2 is released.

The base-level package features a 17 inch high-gloss screen, turned off to provide a contrasting background, and a 6 cell battery for heft, to resist jolts.

The dampened hinge tilts front or back, making it easy to find the right glare-free angle and a groove just above the function keys supports either vertical and landscape viewing. PS. April fools.



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- We don't distribute/trade or sell subscriber information.
- There is no advertising content.

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# Directory Grouped by age



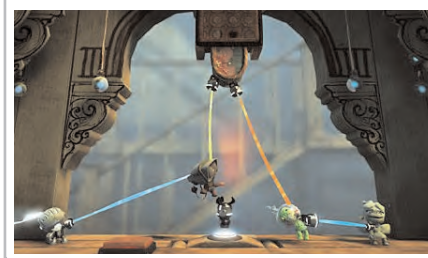
## CTR Editor's Choice Selections, March 2011

*Products that scored 4.2 or higher  
on the rating instrument.*

**Body and Brain Connection,**  
www.namcobandaigames.com  
**LittleBigPlanet 2,** www.us.playstation.com  
**Magic School Bus, The: Oceans,**  
www.scholastic.com  
**Mario Sports Mix,**  
www.nintendo.com  
**Plants vs. Zombies DS,** www.popcap.com



*Above, the Brain and Body Connection.  
Below, Little Big Planet 2*



### All Ages

**Disney Channel All Star Party,**  
www.disneyinteractivestudios.com  
**Mario Sports Mix,** www.nintendo.com

### Babies & Toddlers

**Brain Buddy Plush Remote Interactive  
DVD Set,** www.brainybaby.com  
**Smart-e-Dog,** www.brainybaby.com  
**Vtech Peek at Me Bunnies,**  
www.vtechkids.com

### Preschool & Kindergarten

**Rock Star Mickey,** www.fisher-price.com  
**Smarty Pants School,** http://smarty-pantsschool.com  
**TNT Reading,** www.braintrain.com

### Early Elementary

**Gummy Bears: Gummy Ear Buds,**  
www.sakar.com  
**InnoPad,** www.vtechkids.com  
**LeapPad Explorer,** www.leapfrog.com  
**Magic School Bus, The: Oceans,**  
www.scholastic.com  
**Speed Slider,** www.wildplanet.com  
**Square of Life,**  
http://www.ciese.org/curriculum/squareproj/  
**TeachTown: Basics 2.0,**  
www.teachtown.com

### Upper Elementary

**Air Hogs R/C Pocket Copter,** www.spinmaster.com  
**Body and Brain Connection,** www.namcobandaigames.com  
**Capture Cam,** www.wildplanet.com  
**LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars,**  
www.lucasarts.com  
**LittleBigPlanet 2,**  
www.us.playstation.com  
**Plants vs. Zombies DS,**  
www.popcap.com  
**Spy Net Video Watch with Night  
Vision,** www.jakkspace.com  
**Steel Diver,** www.nintendo.com

### Middle School

**Air Hogs Hyperactive,** www.spinmaster.com  
**Air Swimmers,** www.x-zylo.com  
**Buckyballs,** www.getbuckyballs.com  
**Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation,**  
www.nintendo.com  
**Pac-Man Party,** www.namcobandaigames.com  
**Tetris Link,** www.technosourceusa.com

*The non-profit Mediatech Foundation is where we test and archive review copies of software. Visit  
http://www.mediatech.org for more information.*



## Acknowledgments

Thanks to the following individuals, including the members of the Mediatech Foundation, who contributed their valuable feedback during the testing process.



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# Update on Tech Toys

Every spring, hundreds of toy inventors meet at Toy Fair in New York City to show off their latest inventions. Some are pretty amazing! Here are some links and videos.



## 1. To make a sculpture out of magnets, which of these would you use?

- a) Buckyballs. <http://www.getbuckyballs>
- b) Zen Magnets <http://zenmagnets.com/>
- c) Neocube <http://www.theneocube.com/>

The answer is all three. Each consists of a set of small, strong, round magnets made out of a special metal called Neodymium. Learn more about the story of Buckyballs at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBCha5ftLOW>



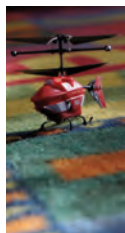
## 2. T/F Can a balloon swim like a fish, with no strings attached?

Visit [www.x-zylo.com](http://www.x-zylo.com) to learn about Air Swimmers, a new kind of radio controlled helium-filled fish that can be flown around a room, completely untethered. Propelled by a large tail that flaps slowly from side to side, the pillow-sized fish blimps come uninflated, and require a trip to your local party store. They were invented by Blake English, a Stanford graduate student.



## 3. Help! I need some ideas to build with my LEGOs

Don't worry. Inspiration can be found at Make Magazine <http://blog.makezine.com/archive/category/lego> where people share photos of projects like this SpongeBob Terminator robot. At <http://www.brickartist.com> you can learn about an artist, Nathan Sawaya, who makes giant sculptures out of LEGO bricks. Finally check to see if there's a First LEGO League in your area, at [www.firstlegoleague.org](http://www.firstlegoleague.org). Perhaps you can join a club to create with other inventors.



## 4. Fill in the blank. Can you name the smallest tech toy ever invented?

- a) What is the world's smallest flying helicopter? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Smallest toy robot? \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Smallest rolling video camera? \_\_\_\_\_

Answers: (a) see the airhogs Air Hogs R/C Pocket Copter <http://bit.ly/hcrFqa> for a great way to torture your cat. (b) The Hexbug Nano <http://www.hexbug.com/nano> moves like a bug, and is powered by a button cell battery. Finally (c) see the Hot Wheels Video Racer, a tiny car with a tiny camera, for first person views of the track <http://bit.ly/eMGoVm>.



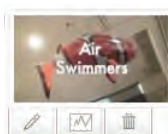
TO LEARN MORE. We spotted other reviewers besides us looking at the latest toys. The Parents' Choice Foundation is the world's oldest non-profit review organization, and posts toy reviews at <http://www.parents-choice.org>. We also spotted the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio crew at Toy Fair. They post videos at <http://www.youtube.com/user/toyportfolio>. Time to Play Magazine <http://www.youtube.com/user/TimeToPlayMag> features reviews by Chris Byrne (the Toy Guy) who is famous for his zany toy reviews. Finally Scott Traylor, President of 360KID, has an eye for technology toys, and posts his videos at <http://www.youtube.com/user/straylor>.



## LittleClickers Playlist: Learn About Tech Toys

[http://www.youtube.com/view\\_play\\_list?p=90B98639C851D753](http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=90B98639C851D753)

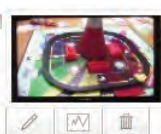
This month's YouTube playlist contains a selection of videos based on topics in this column.



Air Swimmers Demo and Details at Toy



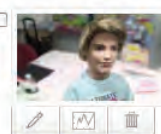
Toy Fair 2011 Air Hogs Hyperactive



Monopoly Live Demonstration



Hot Wheels Video Racer - Sample



Sweet Talkin' Ken (in 90 seconds) at Toy



Sing-a-ma-jigs Duets at Toy Fair 2011



Little Things for iPad App Review

See this page online, at <http://www.LittleClickers.com/lctoys311.html>

LittleClickers is made possible by  
Safe, fun Internet explorations for children  
**COMPUTER EXPLORERS**

For the best online learning activities for preschoolers, go to [www.computerexplorers.com/etots](http://www.computerexplorers.com/etots) <<http://www.computerexplorers.com/etots>> and use the password birthday 03. The web-based version of this page <http://www.littleclickers.com> contains live links, plus a place to report any errors. CTR and COMPUTER EXPLORERS do not have commercial interests in the sites listed on this page. Librarians and teachers are permitted to copy this page for non-profit use. To suggest a future topic or to report a bad link, please contact the editor, Warren Buckleitner [warren@childrenstech.com](mailto:warren@childrenstech.com), or call 908-284-0404 (9 - 3 PM, EST).





SETTING UP A

# Multi-Touch Preschool

An 8 step  
plan, with  
costs, apps,  
and other  
details

Note that while we discuss Apple iOS specific devices, many of these ideas could be used with Android-based tablets.

*Preschool-age children gather with older brothers, sisters or parents in Mediatech's iPad Lounge. You can see the clear iPad storage container mounted on the door, well within reach of a child. Notice that one of the iPads is tethered to the wall with a cable, to prevent theft. Other devices, including a MobiGo, Leapster Explorer, Nintendo DS and an iPod Touch are available in other parts of the room.*

In a preschool classroom, the difference between a smooth day and an utter disaster can be small, as any teacher knows.

Experienced teachers also know not to skimp on the classroom materials available to children during free play time. I've seen a sand table soothe an upset child, simply because it gives him or her something that is easy to use (just run your fingers through the sand), fun to explore (we would hide small plastic toys in the sand), and provides unlimited ways to create (especially when mixed with drops of water).

These types of materials lie at the heart of any early childhood curriculum.

That's why it is so important to consider the iPad, or any other soon-to-be-invented multi-touch tablet or handheld device — as an important new classroom material that can support an active learner. The multi-touch screen makes it easy to accidentally succeed, with all five fingers (see the Taxonomy of Touch, CTR, November 2010) and the 9-hour batteries can make it to the end of the day. Other goodies include a microphone for adding narration to a story, a camera putting your own face onto the screen, motion sensitivity and enough memory to store hundreds of apps. Now it is possible to hand a child a device that can turn a beanbag chair into an ideal interactive learning environment.

## Getting Started

Here's a step-by-step procedure for enhancing a typical preschool classroom with multi-touch learning. No traditional materials are replaced. Instead, the technology and apps are

carefully selected to supplement existing materials and classroom socialization patterns. This plan assumes you already have wireless access throughout the room, and depending on how much technology you already have, can cost between \$1800 to \$4000 per classroom.

To keep things simple, we've decided to use the iTunes store as a regular consumer, so an active iTunes account is required, to be managed and fully controlled by the teacher. Note, however, that Apple has educational purchasing programs, such as the Volume Voucher, that lets you purchase apps in denominations of \$100s of dollars. These cannot be used to purchase apps directly from the App Store. Visit <http://www.apple.com/itunes/education/faq> to learn more.

It is also possible to purchase gift cards, to eliminate the need for a credit card, but at the end of the day, somebody's credit card will be required. Also note that staff training should be minimal for teachers who are already using iPhones, iPods, iTunes or are comfortable downloading content to other digital media players.

**STEP 1:** Start by finding and designating a Windows or Macintosh computer to serve as your iPad content manager. For purposes of budgeting, we've included a student model white MacBook, currently selling for about \$1000 (check for school rates), but it is possible to use just about any Macintosh or Windows computer, as long as it can run the latest version of iTunes. In the ideal situation, this computer is a laptop with a CD-ROM drive and a camera, making it possible to distribute photos to the iPads, or move your existing CD library into the music library. Don't forget that iPads are good music players, too.



- Notes: a) Wireless Internet access in the classroom is required and not include in price.  
b) An existing computer (Windows or Mac) could substitute for the teacher's MacBook.  
c) iPad price includes protective case.

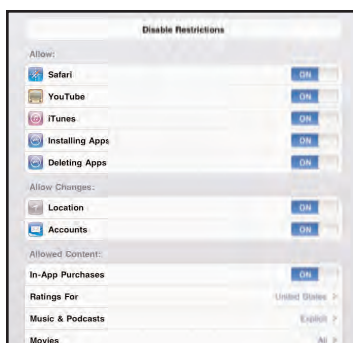
**STEP 2:** You'll need an active credit card to set up an account, and the teacher should be the main account holder, based on the idea that they are given the maximum amount of control over what appears on each screen. You'll need one device, either an iPod Touch but preferably an iPad, per 3 to 5 children. Note that it is now possible to pick up a used iPhone 3, or older iPod Touch as a donation, now that the iPhone 4s have been released; certainly one of the benefits of constantly improving technology. Keep the chargers safely away from children (e.g., all plugged into one power strip, on a higher shelf) and make sure to fill all unused electrical outlets with safety plugs. In the best case, you'll have 1 device for every 3 to 4 children. If your screen/child ratio gets great than 1:5, you run the risk of arguments over a scarce resource.

**STEP 3:** Prepare your content. Download the apps you want (see the starter list), along with the latest copy of iTunes and the iOS operating system. Next, transfer (or burn) any music CDs or photo albums that you want to keep on the iPads. In choosing apps, make sure you support your curriculum. Once your content library is stocked, its time to start filling up your iPads

using the included USB/iPhone table. This is also a good time to put your school's logo on the main screen, or perhaps a group photograph.

**STEP 4:** Sync, or connect each iPad to your computer using the included wires. In most cases, the syncing process happens automatically, once your host computer sniffs the iPad. This can take some time, so bring a book.

**STEP 5:** Time to work on the security. Don't forget that each iPad is a portal to your credit card information. In addition, you don't want a child to accidentally erase all your apps, or end up on some obscure web site. It is easy to turn on or off these features by exploring the Restrictions tab, found in Settings. Make sure you don't forget your four digit PIN -



OtterBox, \$90





- we recommend keeping this the same for each device. If you plan on sharing setup privileges with a co-teacher, it is best to think up and use a second PIN that you don't use for personal use, such as your banking. At this point, you might consider budgeting for a protective case which can increase the chance your iPad will survive a fall on a tile or cement floor. We don't recommend clear, plastic screen covers, however, as they can reduce the responsivity of the screen.

**STEP 6.** Make your iPad hard to steal. There are a few things you can do. First, set up the anti-theft features that come standard as part of iOS 4.2 or higher. Here's what you do. First download and install an app called Find My iPhone (it works for iPads and iPod Touches, too).



After you register using your iTunes screen name and password, the app registers your device on a remote Apple server. Now you can start the app anytime to see where your devices are, superimposed over a Google map.

Try it out first to make sure it works-- it's especially handy if you plan on letting your iPad devices go home for a weekend, say with a staff member for inservice. We were able to successfully track four devices simultaneously. Once you've found your iPad on the map from another iPad or iPhone, you can choose to lock it up, wipe it clean of any information, or display a please return message, along with a loud audio alarm.

Cost Per Classroom			
Higher estimate* with iPads and teacher laptop			
	Cost per unit	Quantity	Total
iPads 16 GB, no 3G or case	\$533.93	5	\$2,670
MacBook	\$1020	1	\$1,020
Apps	\$4	60	\$240
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$3,930</b>
* does not include wireless Internet access and router			

Least possible costs*, using existing PC			
	Cost per unit	Quantity	Total
iPads 16 GB, no 3G or case	\$533.93	2	\$1,068
iPod Touches 4th generation, with cameras	\$240	2	\$480
Apps	\$4	60	\$240
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$1,788</b>
* does not include wireless Internet access and router			

**STEP 7.** Create a physical storage system. We mounted a clear magazine rack on the wall, well within reach of a short pre-schooler. The clear plastic makes it easy to know if the device is there or not, making it easy to see if the iPad is being used, and giving it an easy to reach home that children can get used to using. You may consider security locks if needed, that will tether the iPad or iPod Touch to a table.

**STEP 8.** Now its time to organize your apps. Start by fine-tuning the apps that appear on each screen, much like you'd test out different materials on a busy shelf. Children are natural app-browsers, which is why it is so important to put quality apps on the home screen for them to discover. In addition, you can use the iOS folder option to make folders (just hold your finger down over an app icon until it starts to wriggle, and then drag and drop it over another app). Here are some recommended Apps for each area of the curriculum.

## Recommended Apps

Here's a list of some no-fail apps. You can place each set in a different folder if you like, but make sure you put the good stuff on the first screen.

### Art Area

**123 Color** is a collection of dot-to-dot puzzles, that you touch to fill in creating an active counting and letter recognition experience. Visit KidCalc. <http://kidcalc.info> \$1.99. Ages 3-up.

**Color & Draw for Kids** is an open-ended drawing program that gives you the best of both worlds, free one finger scribbling on a blank screen, or coloring on one of 50 traditional-looking coloring book pages. You can also import your own photos. Builds art, creativity, drawing, fine motor development. TipiTap Apps. [www.tipitap.com](http://www.tipitap.com) \$.99. Ages 3-9.

**Color Collector** (camera required) is another one of the Tickle Tap App series. It turns your camera-equipped device into a color sampler. Builds colors, visual discrimination. zinc Roe Design. [www.zincroe.com](http://www.zincroe.com) \$1.99. Ages 3-5.

**Doodle Buddy** can be used to sketch out the plans for an invention on an iPad screen. This app is easy to start and use, and it uses multi-touch. Builds art, drawing, creativity. Pinger. [www.pinger.com](http://www.pinger.com) \$free. Ages 3-up.

**Drawing Pad** turns your iPad into a smart easel. Because the tools appear in a drawer on the side of the screen, you can pull them out or put them away, as needed. Builds drawing, art, creativity. Darren Murtha Design. [www.touchscreen-preschoolgames.com](http://www.touchscreen-preschoolgames.com) \$1.99. Ages 2-12.

**Little Things** is a well-designed hunt and find experience that could be a wonderful collaborative problem solving experience. Builds visual discrimination, matching and logic. KlickTock, [www.klicktock.com](http://www.klicktock.com) \$2. Ages 4-up.

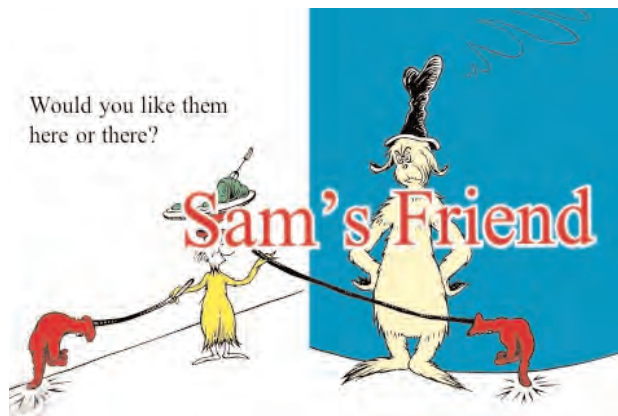
**SpinArt.** Turn your iPhone screen into a paint-splattered mess with this fun program.



Builds art, creativity, logic (spatial relations). Brian Smith. [www.7twenty7.net](http://www.7twenty7.net) \$1.99. Ages 3-up.

## Language (Reading & Writing)

**Green Eggs & Ham.** Like the other Oceanhouse Media titles, Green Eggs & Ham follows the same formula of pulling the text and illustrations from the original Dr. Seuss story, and presenting it, one page at a time with clear responsive labels. The simplicity is refreshing. There are now a huge library of Oceanhouse Media titles, all with this similar design. Builds



reading, word recognition. Oceanhouse Media. [www.oceanhousemedia.com](http://www.oceanhousemedia.com) \$3.99. Ages 3-up.

**Interactive Alphabet 1.5.** Each letter becomes a toy, in this well designed, responsive alphabet book that following a simple, tried-and-true technique. Builds reading, alphabet. Piikea Street. [www.piikeastreet.com](http://www.piikeastreet.com) \$3. Ages 3-6.

**Letter Writer: Oceans** is one of two letter tracing apps (the second is Letter Writer: Space, for lower case). Children move their finger over each letter to learn how it is formed, with autocorrecting feedback. Builds writing, letter tracing, fine motor coordination. Barking Dog Interactive. <http://barking-doginteractive.com/> \$.99. Ages 3-7.

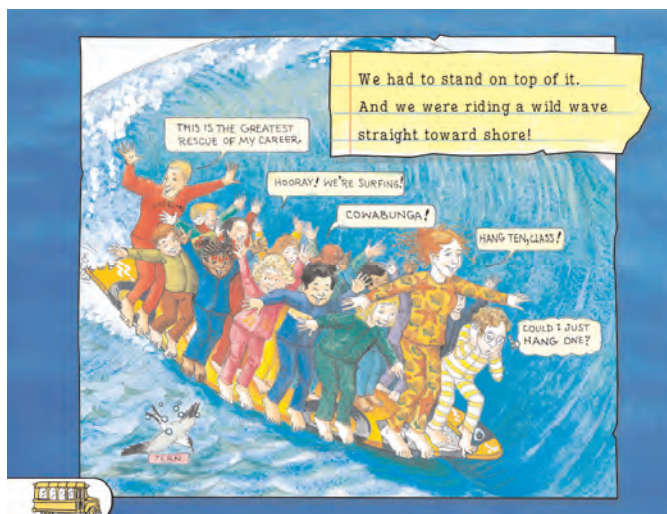
**Montessori Crosswords** is a set of well designed crossword puzzles, with picture cues and audio for each word. Builds reading, writing, language. L'Escapadou. <http://lescapedou.com> \$3.99. Ages 3-up.

**Nash Smasher!** If you want to try an excellent example of good ebook design, try Nash Smasher! by Bill Doyle with illustrations by Troy Cummings. Of course the design is helped along by a good story. Builds reading, emotions, fine motor. Crab Hill Press. [www.crabhillpress.com](http://www.crabhillpress.com) \$1.99. Ages 4-up.

**PopOut! The Tale of Peter Rabbit.** Children's ebooks on the iPad don't get much better than this interactive rendition of Peter Rabbit, where every touch makes something interesting happen in support of the story. Builds reading, language. Loud Crow Interactive Inc. [www.loudcrow.com](http://www.loudcrow.com) \$5. Ages 4-up.

**Toy Story 2 Read-Along** is a 23 page/screen adaptation that mixes highlights of the second movie (Toy Story 2) with two games, two songs and three coloring activities that let children smart color the page outlines. Builds reading, language, logic, creativity. Disney Publishing Worldwide. [www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com](http://www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com) \$4.99. Ages 3-9.

**Toontastic.** Turn your iPad screen into a puppet show. Children can record their own voices as they add clipart. Builds creativity, language, planning, art, music, telling stories, cartoons. Launchpad Toys. <http://launchpadtoys.com> \$3. Ages 5-up.



## Science Area

**Magic School Bus: Oceans** marks Ms. Frizzle's iPad debut.

Based on the Scholastic book The Magic School Bus: On The Ocean Floor by Joanna Cole and illustrated by Bruce Degen, the app is arranged in ebook fashion, with pages that flip and hot spots that come to life. Content includes seven science explorations, 26 real photos and 11 videos of underwater animals and plant life, plus a trivia game on 20 animals. Builds science, ocean life. Scholastic Media. [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com) \$8. Ages 2-up.

**My First Weighing Exercises HD.** Turn your iPad or iPod Touch into a balance beam scale. There are three modes of play, each with three challenge levels, and it is possible to alternate between ounces and grams. Builds math, equalities, balance, addition, subtraction, sums, mental math. A&R Entertainment. [www.ar-entertainment.net](http://www.ar-entertainment.net) \$1.99. Ages 2-7.

**Solar System for iPad.** For a child with an interest in the stars and planets, this app is fun to just explore, despite the need for reading. Touch a planet, moon or comet to explore, in this carefully crafted interactive science poster that covers every corner of our Solar System. Builds science, astronomy, the solar system, planets. Touch Press. [www.touchpress.com](http://www.touchpress.com)

Dust or Magic **2011**  
**AppCamp**

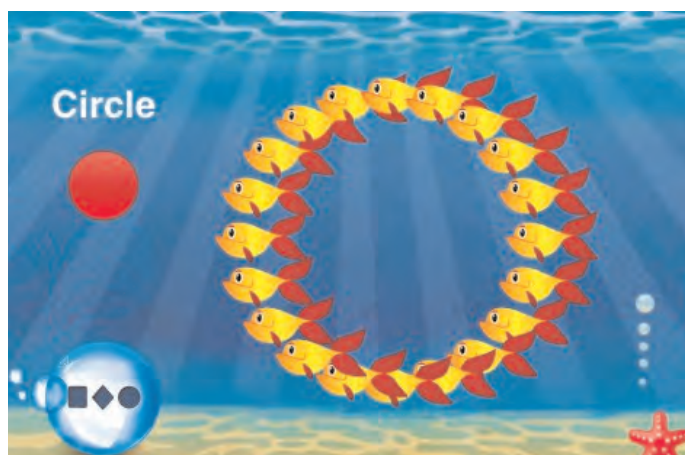


Do you make children's apps?  
Don't miss Dust or Magic's 2nd Annual AppCamp, May 22-24 (Sunday - Tuesday), Asilomar, Monterey California, where marshmallow roasts on the pacific beach mix with conversations about the next great app.



\$14. Ages 7-up.

**Ultimate Dinopedia: The Most Complete Dinosaur Reference Ever** lets children explore 600 types of dinosaurs. Builds science, dinosaurs, ecosystems. National Geographic Society. [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com) \$6. Ages 6-up.



up.

## Math Area

**Fish School** makes the screen into a letter and numeral busy box, where failure isn't an option. Builds logic, math (counting, numeral recognition) the alphabet, letter recognition, shapes, memory. Duck Duck Moose Design. [www.duckduckmoosedesign.com](http://www.duckduckmoosedesign.com) \$.99, \$1.99. Ages 2-up.

**My First Tangrams HD.**

This \$1.99 app includes 36 tangram puzzles, with drag-and-drop autocorrecting. A&R Entertainment. [www.ar-entertainment.net](http://www.ar-entertainment.net) \$1.99. Ages 3-up.

**My First Wood Block Puzzles.** Part of the

Learning is fun educational game collection, this puzzle app lets you press a block to swap it as you try to reconstruct the picture.

It features nine different animals, three difficulty levels, and sound effects. Builds classification, matching. A&R Entertainment. [www.ar-entertainment.net](http://www.ar-entertainment.net) \$1.99. Ages 2-7.



**Park Math.** Another great app from Duck Duck Moose turns a playground into things to count, weigh, compare and classify. There are two levels -- Pre-K and first grade. Builds math, counting, quantities, adding, subtraction, numerals. Duck Duck Moose Design. [www.duckduckmoosedesign.com](http://www.duckduckmoosedesign.com) \$1.99. Ages 3-up.

**Symmetry Shuffle.** Anyone who has ever packed a suitcase knows the value of spatial intelligence -- the ability to manipulate shapes in your head. This app contains 12 sets of objects that can be slid, flipped and turned, until all the shapes are correctly aligned. Builds math, geometry, spatial relations. Carstens Studios. [www.carstensstudios.com](http://www.carstensstudios.com) \$1.99. Ages 4-up.

**Tickle Tap Toddler Pack** contains five activities in one iPad friendly app. Builds logic, sorting, counting, music, language. zinc Roe Design. [www.zincroe.com](http://www.zincroe.com) \$4.99. Ages 3-6.

## Music

**Boogie Bopper.** Another one of the Tickle Tap Apps, Boogie Bopper lets children play ten simple melodies like Bingo and Mary Had a Little Lamb by touching a rainbow shaped xylophone, with circle-shaped keys arranged from low to high. Even an accidental tap plays the right note, and a series of taps can create the song. A second more open-ended mode lets children freely construct their own instrument, by moving musical balls around the screen. There's not a lot to do, but you can't beat the design for giving children a way to explore melodies. Builds music, melody, rhythm, causality. zinc Roe Design. [www.zincroe.com](http://www.zincroe.com) \$2. Ages 2-4.

**Magic Piano.** Turns your iPod into a zany piano keyboard with social features, that let you share songs with other players, from around the world. Builds music, rhythm. Smule, Inc. [www.smule.com](http://www.smule.com) \$.99. Ages 4-up.



**Old MacDonald Piano** is a 17 key (octave + 2) piano keyboard, that includes four modes: Play and Sing Along (play Old MacDonald by following highlighted keys), Learn the Song (play and sing along, also with highlighted keys), Karaoke Mode (record your voice and piano playing by following words in English, Spanish or French) and Free Style Mode (free experimentation). See also Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, which shares a similar design. Builds music, piano. Kiboomu Inc. [www.kiboomu.com](http://www.kiboomu.com) \$0.99. Ages 3-up.

**TonePad.** Make musical patterns, and play with the structure of music. Builds music, timing. LoftLab. [www.tonepadapp.com](http://www.tonepadapp.com) \$free. Ages 7-up.

The iPad is less than a year old, yet there's no doubt it, and devices like it, will transform how children play and learn. As you would with any traditional material, try each app with different children and change things around once in a while to keep things interesting. After all, starting each day with a set of fresh, fun, engaging materials can greatly increase your chances of a smooth day.





# Feature Reviews

MARCH 1, 2011

*Here's an alphabetical listing of new products, along with a full review, ratings and tester feedback. The "Entry Date" refers to the date we first learned of the product.*

## Body and Brain Connection

Designed by the same team that made Brain Age for the Nintendo DS back in 2006 (Dr. Ryuta Kawashima), Namco's Body and Brain Connection takes advantage of the Kinect's ability to know where your body is at any given time, bringing an exciting new twist (at times literally) to the puzzles.

To enter your answer, you might have to kick balls into a goal, or move your arms in order to line up bridges to direct a moving stream of traffic. As a result, this is one of the most educationally interesting products we've reviewed.

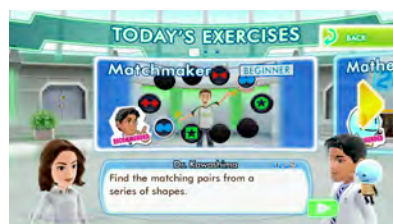
Like the older Brain Age title, you are given a pre-test, and your progress is recorded as you play. If you do better, the challenge increases, but if you start getting wrong answers, the challenge decreases. Content includes twenty activities designed to cover math, logic, reflex, memory and physical-related exercises.

This is one of those titles that makes you feel as if you've just taken an SAT. If your up for the challenge, and you really want a mental/physical workout, by all means get this title.

Details: Namco Bandai Games America Inc., [www.namcobandai.com](http://www.namcobandai.com). Price: \$50. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Xbox Kinect. Teaches/Purpose: memory, logic, math, gross motor. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 12/13/2010. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	96%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	9	

ESRB Rating: Everyone



## Disney Channel All Star Party

This collection of 34 Disney-related mini-games for 1-4 players is a mixed bag. Some games are fun, others confusing.

Designed exclusively for the Wii, this game features characters from seven Disney channel shows, including Camp Rock, Sonny With A Chance and Wizards of Waverly Place.

We lost badly in the Monster Truck race, but had fun (and won easily) throwing water balloons in Camp Rock, although the idea of tossing balloons at innocent campers is a bit troublesome.

You can jump to a tutorial at anytime -- even in a game, which is a nice feature, and the controls are explained well. The more you play, the more games you unlock. There are both circuit mode and free play mode, and high scores can be saved.

Commercial messages include embedded Disney themes, and trivia about each show. There's a bit of a "star worship" aspect to this title that we find distasteful, but that's a call best left to you, the reader. All in all, this is a nice collection of activities. Developed by Page 44 for Disney Interactive Studios.

Details: Disney Interactive Studios, [www.disneyinteractivestudios.com](http://www.disneyinteractivestudios.com). Price: \$50. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Wii. Teaches/Purpose: logic, Disney trivia, timing, gross motor. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 10/26/2010. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	82%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	7	

ESRB Rating: Everyone, Comic Mischief







## LittleBigPlanet 2

Sackboy has never had it better than in this second edition of LittleBigPlanet. There's a new story mode, with a bigger, reshaped world (Sackboy is the lead character and your avatar). Our testers found the game easier to get started with, and had a hard time leaving this game.

Content includes 40 new story levels across six themes. A new Create Mode lets you make better levels and new games across multiple genres.

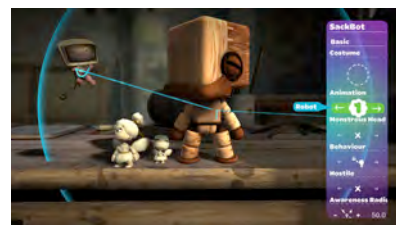
Some features have been simplified. You can reset the controller button for any object and change the rules to any level using Direct Control. Other new features include four-player offline/online multiplayer that lets you include scoreboards and other elements in your creations. There are new gadgets including a grappling hook for swinging, and power gloves for picking items up and throwing them; Customizable Sackbots; a cinematic cut-scene maker; new create materials including Filters, Plasma, and Electrical Neon; and new create tools including a Level Link Badge to jump from level to level. LittleBigPlanet 2 works with content from the first edition, allowing you to play in the online community levels created with the original game. Developed by Media Molecule Ltd. for Sony.

Details: Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc., [www.us.playstation.com](http://www.us.playstation.com). Price: \$60. Ages: 5-up. Platform: PlayStation 3. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, logic, physics. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 12/7/2010. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	96%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	



ESRB Rating: Everyone, Comic Mischief



## Magic School Bus, The: Oceans

Ms. Frizzle comes to the multi-touch screen, in the app version of the Scholastic book "The Magic School Bus: On The Ocean Floor" by Joanna Cole and illustrated by Bruce Degen. Arranged in ebook fashion, the app takes children on a tour of the basic parts of the ocean. At any point, you can touch any child to hear some dialog, and at several points, tilt the screen to interact with the graphics. In addition, you can touch the words to hear the story and then touch again to pause and touch speech bubbles to hear what the characters are saying. Content includes seven interactive science explorations, 26 real photos and 11 videos of underwater animals and plant life, plus a trivia game on 20 animals.

Details: Scholastic Media, [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com). Price: \$8. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: science, ocean life. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 1/3/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	90%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	10	



## Mario Sports Mix

Containing something for everyone, Mario Sports Mix brings four sports to the Wii console with a flair that could only come from the designers at Nintendo.

The games -- volleyball, basketball, ice hockey and dodgeball, can be picked up and played with 1 - 4 players, with or without a Nunchuk (although a Nunchuk is preferred), in tournament or exhibition play, or against other real players, online.

You can play as one of 12 Nintendo characters or as one of your Miis, and the controls are easy to learn. In many cases, the same move works in two games, so you only have to learn the controls one time. Each game starts with a short tutorial that can be skipped, and there are three levels to each game. We tried the easy level, and were able to easily score points; a sign that this game could work with children as young as five.

There are some usual Mario style twists, for example, you can collect coins while you play to earn extra items, like a Koopa Shell to use as a shield in Dodgeball. Each character has unique moves, and stereotypes. For example, Mario has a fireball; Princess Peach uses heart-filled attacks.

In each sport, you can play with up to three players cooperatively or with up to four players competitively in a two-on-two match. If you like Mario-style games, you'll love Mario Sports Mix. Buy it.

Details: Nintendo of America, [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com). Price: \$50. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Wii. Teaches/Purpose: Sports. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 6/24/2010. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	94%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	



ESRB Rating: Everyone, Mild Cartoon Violence





## Pac-Man Party

You can play with up to four players in various virtual game boards, in both competitive and cooperative challenges in this complicated board game, featuring Pac Man characters. Content includes 45 minigames including racing, eating, and rolling a giant snowball.

You can also knock your friends off a mountain top or test your precision and endurance skills in curling, tennis and golfing challenges. There are three modes of play: Story Mode (lets you explore all the game board worlds); Mini-Game Mode; and Party Mode. You can use Power Cookies during minigames to level the playing fields by increasing a character's size or putting extra force and speed behind each effort. Extra content includes the original arcade versions of Pac-Man, Galaga, and Dig Dug.

There are a lot of computer-controlled events that remove the control from the player. If you have the time to figure out this game, it is a possible borrow. Otherwise pass.

Details: Namco Bandai Games America Inc., [www.namcobandaigames.com](http://www.namcobandaigames.com). Price: \$40. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Wii. Teaches/Purpose: some reading, logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3 stars. Entry date: 8/27/2010. [WB]

Ease of Use	4	60%
Educational	6	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	6	

ESRB Rating: Everyone, Mild Cartoon Violence



## Plants vs. Zombies DS

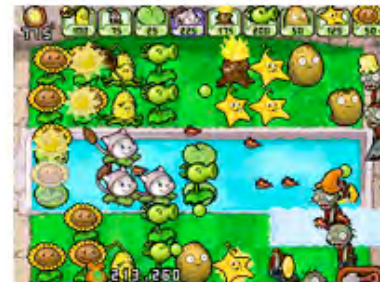
While the graphics aren't nearly as good as the iPad version, this DS edition of Plants vs. Zombies nicely captures the spirit of the game. It has all of the gameplay of the original PC edition with added single or multi-card multiplayer options, five game modes, four all new mini-games and 14 achievements.

In the game, a mob of zombies is about to invade your home and you must use strategically placed home guarding plants to stop them. Each plant has a different attribute, and they must be deliberately placed on the grid with the DS stylus in order to successfully stop each Zombie. Winning takes planning, logic, and fast hand-eye coordination. You can also create your own zombie with the Zombatar. Testers liked it. Note see also the iPad/iPod Touch version.

Details: PopCap Games, [www.popcap.com](http://www.popcap.com). Price: \$20. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: temporal relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 1/28/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	90%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	

ESRB Rating: Everyone 10+, Animated Blood, Cartoon Violence







# Future Releases

MARCH 1, 2011

*This section contains a listing of products in the process of being reviewed, but not yet rated. We also include significant updates of older products.*

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## Air Hogs Hyperactive

Small and fast, this \$50 RC car uses a higher frequency radio controller (2.4 Ghz) for greater range than ever before. It is designed to be used indoors or outdoors.

The small Lithium Polymer battery is charged from six AA batteries that are not included, that are stored in the controller, like other Air Hog toys. Includes a selection of foam and rubber tires for different types of racing. Coming Fall 2011, visit [www.airhogs.com](http://www.airhogs.com).

Details: Spin Master Ltd., [www.spinmaster.com](http://www.spinmaster.com). Price: \$50. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: An RC vehicle. Entry date: 2/13/2011.



## Air Hogs R/C Pocket Copter

Hard to fly but amazing to watch, this small helicopter is no bigger than a marshmallow, with two blades and a counterweight. According to Spinmaster, it is the world's smallest flying helicopter, a fact we did not confirm. However, it does look like some sort of dragon fly when you first see it. Designed for indoor use, it features a crash-resistant plastic hard body, twin rotors for stability, and steady-fly technology. Includes pocket copter, controller, and carry case/charger. Powered by 3 AAA (for the remote) and 6 AA batteries (for the power base).

If you're looking for a starter helicopter, there are better, easier to fly options for the same price.

Details: Spin Master Ltd., [www.spinmaster.com](http://www.spinmaster.com). Price: \$35. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, operating remote controls, flying, physics. Entry date: 2/18/2011.



## Air Swimmers

A school of large fish was spotted recently, swimming high over the exhibits at the Javits Center recently at Toy Fair. Air Swimmers (\$40, William Mark Corporation, [www.x-zylo.com](http://www.x-zylo.com)) are radio controlled helium-filled fish that can be flown around a room, untethered. Propelled by a large tail that flaps slowly from side to side, in a very fish-like way, the pillow-sized toys come uninflated, and require a trip to your local party store before they can swim -- or fly.

Each fish is powered by 1 AAA battery, which will provide about 4 hours of flying time, after they are filled with helium. They'll last about two weeks before you need to refill them, unless, of course, you meet a ceiling fan.

Air Swimmers were invented by a Stanford student, Blake English (pictured), as part of a product design course. Based on the crowd gathered around his booth at Toy Fair, he deserves a passing grade, although the true test will come in May, when the first fish appear in toy stores. See the video here at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C39Ap0HFsPA>

Details: William Mark Corporation, [www.x-zylo.com](http://www.x-zylo.com). Price: \$40. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: An RC toy. Entry date: 2/17/2011.



## Brain Buddy Plush Remote Interactive DVD Set

This plush elephant works as a remote for the interactive DVD (included), allowing your child to play the multi-game Learn'n Play DVD without using your computer's keyboard or mouse. The DVD covers letters, numbers, shapes & colors, and animals.

Details: The Brainy Company, [www.brainybaby.com](http://www.brainybaby.com). Price: \$35. Ages: 2-5. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: letters, numbers, shapes, colors, animals. Entry date: 2/28/2011.



## Buckyballs

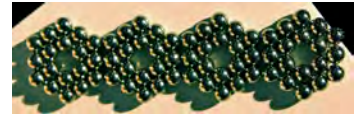
Made from Neodymium -- a rare earth metal mined in China, Buckyballs are a brand name for a set of small, strong magnetic balls, sold in sets of 216 for about \$30 each. Similar magnets are sold under other brand names, such as CyberCube, EuroCube, Nanodots, NeoCube, QQMag, TetraMag and Zen Magnets.

The balls are strong enough to stay in a loop for a bracelet or necklace. They can be very dangerous if two or more are ingested, because the strong magnets could pinch the walls of intestinal passages (or worse). So don't eat them.

It is possible to make just about any shape from a set of balls, including a geodesic dome, as designed by Richard Buckminster Fuller (hence the name, "Buckyballs").

The magnets can be plated with zinc or silver. In this YouTube video, we talk with Buckyballs brand creator Jake Bronstein during Toy Fair 2011 to learn the story of Buckyballs, including how they are made, and where they come from. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBCha5ftLOW>

Details: Maxfield & Oberton Holdings, LLC, [www.getbuckyballs.com](http://www.getbuckyballs.com). Price: \$30 and up. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Toy. Teaches/Purpose: classifying, patterns, comparing quantities. Entry date: 2/20/2011.



## Capture Cam

This motion-activated digital camera has an adjustable motion sensor. When it sees movement in the room, it takes a photo, or a series of images in rapid succession.

After adjusting the angle of the motion sensor, you place the camera and try not to set it off. The camera can hold 30 pictures at a time. Photos can be connected to your computer using the included USB cord, or uploaded to the Spy Photo Lab editing software (available for free download at [www.spygear.net](http://www.spygear.net)). So, if you want to put the photo in the middle of a "Wanted" sign, you could. For quick snap-and-go missions, the motion-activated Capture Cam can also be used as a manual push-button camera.

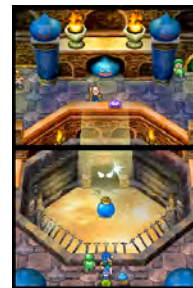
Details: Wild Planet, [www.wildplanet.com](http://www.wildplanet.com). Price: \$35. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: photography. Entry date: 2/28/2011.



## Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation

Designed for the Nintendo DS, this action adventure game lets you travel through multiple worlds to gather allies and battle monsters in order to defeat evil forces. Sound familiar? There's a lot of depth to the game, however, with 15 character classes, and the ability to change between classes on the fly.

Details: Nintendo of America, [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com). Price: \$35. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic, creativity. Entry date: 2/10/2011.



## Gummy Bears: Gummy Ear Buds

The outer portion of these ear buds are shaped liked gummy bears. The package smells like gummy bears too, but the actual ear buds just smell like plastic. They come in different colors and scents, and are compatible with iPod, iPhone, and MP3 Players. Our testers were less than impressed with the sound quality.

Details: Sakar International Inc., [www.sakar.com](http://www.sakar.com). Price: \$call. Ages: 5-up. Platform: ear buds. Teaches/Purpose: a peripheral. Entry date: 2/10/2011.





### InnoPad

What's next from Vtech, following last year's MobiGo? An \$80 touch tablet-like platform, called InnoPad, designed for ages 4-9. Note: See also LeapPad Explorer for a similar product, from Leapfrog.

Features include a 5" LCD touch screen, a tilt-sensor, microphone, headphone jack, SD card storage and a USB connection to a computer for downloading additional content.

Software will come on \$25 cartridges, and will include E-books that feature Toy Story, Dora the Explorer and Disney Princesses, a music player, games and an Art Studio with painting and drawing applications, for use with either fingers or the included stylus. It also provides a Photo Viewer/Editor. There will be nine cartridges at launch, plus an MP3 player for both videos or songs, a Calculator, Calendar, Notepad, Clock with personalized voice alarm and Friends Address Book.

Visit [www.vtechkids.com/download](http://www.vtechkids.com/download) to see a list of downloadable content. VTech promises "over 100" download titles by the end of this year. A Learning Lodge Navigator is designed to track progress.

Details: VTech Electronics North America, [www.vtechkids.com](http://www.vtechkids.com). Price: \$80. Ages: 4-9. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: early learning, reading, all school subjects. Entry date: 2/13/2011.



### LeapPad Explorer

Coming later this year from Leapfrog, a new tablet-style configuration of the Leapster that is designed around the existing didj (Flash-based) technology.

Features include a slightly larger 5 inch color screen, accelerometer (for tilt input), single touch screen with stylus, d-pad controls, USB, camera, 4 AA batteries, 2 GB of memory and no SD card expansion. It also has a built in microphone and a headphone jack. According to Leapfrog, the software library will include 80 "apps" or cartridges that will include 14 LeapPad titles, 20 Cartridges plus about 50 activities that can be downloaded. A fall release date is planned. While it costs about \$20 more than the Vtech InnoPad, it also has the included camera.

Details: Leapfrog, [www.leapfrog.com](http://www.leapfrog.com). Price: \$100. Ages: 4-up. Platform: Smart Toy, Leapster. Teaches/Purpose: all school subjects. Entry date: 2/11/2011.



### LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars

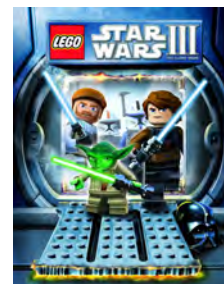
Originally scheduled for release last Fall, LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars is the next chapter for the series that was one of the first to bring drop-in, drop-out interactivity to the games.

Developed by the original team at Traveller's Tales, the game will ship on March 22, 2011 for Windows, Wii, Nintendo DS & 3DS, PS3, PSP, and Xbox 360 systems.

Content will include LEGO-ized characters from both seasons of the animated television series, Star Wars: The Clone Wars, as well as characters from the theatrical Star Wars Saga.

Features will include new battle modes including head-to-head combat and a better level builder, so that you can make your own bases and battlefields. You can play as a Jedi or Separatist; and new play modes include Squad command, Lightsaber slicing, Lightsaber jumps, long distance Jedi attacks and Grapple Tie-Ups. Visit [www.legostarwars.com](http://www.legostarwars.com). Prices are \$50 for Wii, PS3 and Xbox 360 versions, \$40 for Nintendo 3DS, and \$30 for Nintendo DS, PSP, and Windows.

Details: LucasArts, [www.lucasarts.com](http://www.lucasarts.com). Price: \$50. Ages: 7-up. Platform: PlayStation 3, Wii, Xbox 360, PSP, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic, socialization. Entry date: 2/12/2010.





### Rock Star Mickey

Coming Fall 2011, a scaled back Rock Star Mickey from Fisher-Price. Mickey is dressed in rock star gear including sunglasses and a guitar.

As he sings, his head bobs, he kick-steps and finishes with his signature move, the mouska-split, where he plays the guitar with his nose. Songs include "You Really Got Me". Runs on 4 AA batteries, included.

Details: Fisher-Price, Inc., [www.fisher-price.com](http://www.fisher-price.com). Price: \$50. Ages: 2-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: dancing, music. Entry date: 2/28/2011.



### Smart-e-Dog

Smart-e-Dog plays music, games and interactive stories by squeezing his paws. He can be personalized to call your child by name, or speak Spanish (included), French or Chinese (available for download from online store). You can also download additional content from the online store listing 8,000 songs, 100 stories, and 30 games. Also available: Smart-e-Cat.

Details: The Brainy Company, [www.brainybaby.com](http://www.brainybaby.com). Price: \$40. Ages: 2-5. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: language. Entry date: 2/28/2011.



### Smarty Pants School

Smarty Pants School is an app for the iPad designed to enable parents and teachers to evaluate children's basic reading skills according to the recommendations of the National Reading Panel. The app assesses a child's early reading skills in five critical areas: Letter Knowledge (how well the child knows the letters of the alphabet by name); Phonemic awareness (how well the child can hear, identify and compare the sounds that make up words); Phonics (how well the child understands the relationships between written letters and spoken sounds); Reading "phonetically" (how well the child can decipher simple words); and Spelling "sight" words (how quickly the child can recognize and spell common, sometimes irregularly spelled words). This assessment takes less than 10 minutes and is full of positive encouragement and game-like activities designed to reduce children's test anxiety. At the end of the assessment the child's performance in each basic skill area along with standard grade-level expectations is provided, along with suggestions as to the Smarty Pants class most appropriate for that child's current reading skills. It also offers links to activities parents can do with their children at home.

Details: Smarty Pants School LLC, <http://smartypantsschool.com>. Price: \$free. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Entry date: 2/9/2011.







## Speed Slider

This bowl-sized toy is designed to be kicked like a soccer ball either alone, or in groups of up to six.

The sturdy, half-dome component has a slick, flat underside so it can glide smoothly across the floor in response to a light toe tap (for small play areas) or a power kick (for larger spaces).

The dome contains four big buttons, each displaying a different color, number and direction. The top of the dome has a fifth colored button and a speaker that calls out commands. Commands include colors, numbers, math problems, double digits, and sequences. Players kick the buttons that correspond to the command. (Example: "9 minus 7" – player kicks button # 2; "Dribble" – player kicks left button, then right button, then left button; "53" – player kicks button # 5 then button # 3.)

Younger players have the option to start with more basic commands, such as a single color or number, and work their way up to more challenging levels. Depending on the number of accurate kicks in each round, the game will either stay in beginner mode or automatically advance to games that incorporate a wider variety of commands and longer rounds. The game plays music, tracks each player's time or score and announces the results. Four additional games include:

- Speed Tap – player taps the top button, alternating feet, as many times as they can in a timed skill drill;
- Speed Keep Away – players take turns trying to keep one player from gaining possession of the slider;
- Speed Pass – players work toward a shared score in a cooperative pass-kick version of the main game;
- Speed Memory – player kicks the slider in the same order as a growing series of memory-building commands.

Coming Fall 2011.

Details: Wild Planet, [www.wildplanet.com](http://www.wildplanet.com). Price: \$25. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: lower body coordination, math facts. Entry date: 2/28/2011.



## Spy Net Video Watch with Night Vision

The follow up to last year's Spy Net Video Watch, this new version looks the same, with the added ability to take videos and photos in complete darkness, using a night vision mode. You can capture images of 'shadow agents' with the new Spy Net's Most Wanted feature, and play new missions and games. The capacity is the same: 20 minutes of video or over 3 hours of audio, or up to 2000 photos.

Details: Jakks Pacific, Inc., [www.jakkspacific.com](http://www.jakkspacific.com). Price: \$60. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: representational play, language, photography. Entry date: 2/28/2011.



## Square of Life

Looking for a collaborative science project for your preschool or elementary classroom? Bucket Buddies and Square of Life are designed to get classrooms working together. They are collaborative projects sponsored by CIESE (Center for Innovation in Engineering and Science Education). Visit <http://www.ciese.org/curriculum/squareproj/> or <http://www.ciese.org/curriculum/bucketproj/>

Details: Center for Innovation in Engineering and Science Education, <http://www.ciese.org/curriculum/squareproj/>. Price: \$free. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: science, biology. Entry date: 2/27/2011.





## Steel Diver

Can you steer your tiny submarine through a 3D underwater maze? This combat game, launched along with the Nintendo 3DS combines side scrolling arcade action with an augmented reality game, where the 3DS becomes a periscope. You start by choosing from three submarines, controlled using the lower touch screen. You have to be careful to avoid enemy submarines, depth charges and sea creatures.

When in battle mode, the 3DS gyroscope turns the entire game console into a controller. There are both quick play and mission modes, and games can be saved.

A two-player strategy mode lets you fight against another player. While the graphics seem small, the 3D effects make it seem like you're looking into a real fish tank, with bubbles adding depth.

Details: Nintendo of America, [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com). Price: \$40. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: timing, logic, strategy, problem solving. Entry date: 2/22/2011.



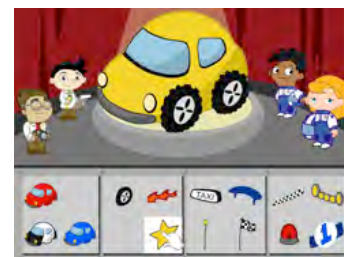
## TeachTown: Basics 2.0

Designed for young children with Autism Spectrum Disorders with a development age of three to seven years, TeachTown: Basics covers Pre-K through first grade curricula and teaches concepts that improve performance in six key learning areas: Language Development, Language Arts, Cognitive Skills, Social & Emotional Skills, Adaptive Skills, and Mathematics. Each of these areas has five levels that follow a developmental progression, with increasing linguistic, cognitive, and/or social complexity. Teachers complete a ranking questionnaire regarding the student's current performance, giving the child a starting rank for each domain. The curriculum is then based on student performance and is adjusted for each student, and curriculum can be customized to meet IEP goals.

The instructional program offers On Computer Programs connected to motivational Off Computer Activities. The On Computer Lessons motivate children by offering cartoon rewards and animated games upon completion of the lesson. These rewards are awarded on an Intermittent Reinforcement Schedule, meaning they get a reward on average for every four correct answers.

Subscription prices start at \$40/month, or \$380/year for in home use. For school pricing, please call.

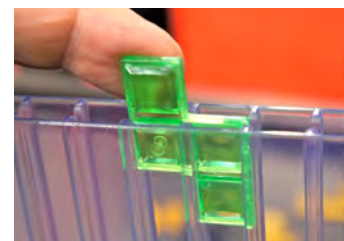
Details: Teach Town Inc., [www.teachtown.com](http://www.teachtown.com). Price: \$40/month and up. Ages: 3-7. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: language and social skills. Entry date: 1/25/2011.



## Tetris Link

Here's a low tech twist on a high tech game, with no batteries required. Players take turns rolling the die and dropping Tetris parts (Tetriminos) into a special plastic tower. The object is to link Tetriminos of the same color to earn points, while blocking opponents from scoring, bringing an element of strategy into the game. Players track their points in real-time with the built-in scoring markers and when the tower is full the player with the highest score wins the game. Designed for up to 4 players. The kit includes a game tower, 100 playing pieces in four colors, playing die and instructions.

Details: Techno Source, [www.technosourceusa.com](http://www.technosourceusa.com). Price: \$20. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: strategy. Entry date: 2/28/2011.







### **TNT Reading**

This reading software combines reading games with attention and memory building exercises. TNT (Test 'n' Train) Reading focuses on the following four areas: grapheme-phoneme matching; sustained attention; mental processing speed; and working memory. The exercises can be set to progress automatically, with each skill tested at each level. If a child has not mastered a skill, he/she receives training until mastery occurs. If a child does master the skill, they are rewarded with a game break.

There are three levels, each consisting of three Mastery Steps. Each Mastery Step is based on grade level and progresses from such topics as upper & lower case letter recognition, matching and sequencing (Level 1 - Mastery Step 1 for PreK-K) through discriminating between similar vowel digraphs and distinguishing differences between diphthong sounds (Level 3 - Mastery Step 9 for Grades 1-3). Each Level is priced at \$495 for one station with unlimited users, or you can purchase all three Levels for \$795.

Details: BrainTrain, [www.braintrain.com](http://www.braintrain.com). Price: \$495. Ages: 4-up. Platform: Windows. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Entry date: 1/24/2011.

### **Vtech Peek at Me Bunnies**

This plush bunny doubles as a night light. It has sensors on his body and learning keys on its hands and feet. A parent can switch the bunny to Day or Night mode. When in night mode, a yellow star on the bunny's tummy plays songs and glows. Includes peek-a-boo play (6 months), learning body parts (12 months) and emotional play (24 months).

Details: VTech Electronics North America, [www.vtechkids.com](http://www.vtechkids.com). Price: \$15. Ages: 6 months - 2. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: causal learning, body parts, emotional play. Entry date: 2/27/2011.

