



Children's TECHNOLOGY Review™

September 2011

Volume 19, No. 9, Issue 138

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BATTERIES

Price: \$24/year for 12 PDF issues
<http://childrenstech.com/subscribe/>

Boca Toca Hair Salon Toca Boca. <http://tocaboca.com/>
\$1.99. Ages 3-up. See page 17.

App to School!

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Profit vs. pedagogy: How are children's app developers supposed to eat?

We were thrilled to review the second app from Motion Math, called **Motion Math Zoom**. From a math learning point of view, it's a doozy (read why on page 14). Rather than read about it, why not download a copy, free, from Apple's app store. You'll find it to be a powerful experience. But you might also be surprised to find that it comes with a hidden surprise -- an in-app purchase. Once children master the first level, they find out that the only way to keep playing it to go online and buy the full version of the app for \$4.99. Is putting a toll booth in such an activity unfair? We say no, as long as it's disclosed when you're in the app store, making the decision about whether or not to do the download. We also feel that a full version should be available at the clearly stated price of \$4.99 (or whatever), with no in-app sales feature. We don't like the practice of mixing math practice with app buying process. This is an emerging issue, as more iPads find their way into classrooms. We don't have the answer, other than to give you the straight facts about the financial motives in every product we review.



LittleClickers: All About Batteries

If somebody handed you a lemon, could you make a battery? Do you know which batteries don't need to be recycled -- and which do? Should you store unused batteries in the freezer? Let's learn more about the often overlooked workhorse of all gadgets: the battery. See page 4.

A Talk With the Guys Behind Wizard101

Being the number one virtual world for kids is no small thing, especially in these days of Disney, Nick and Cartoon Network. But what's interesting about **Wizard101** (\$freemium, www.wizard101.com) is that 60% of visitors are playing with another member of their family (at least, according to the publisher sponsored study, at <http://prn.to/laV1Gh>). What are they doing right? To find out, CTR correspondent Scott Traylor interviewed Josef Hall and Todd Coleman of publisher KingIsle on a quest for the magic formula. See page 5.

How Do You Get Good Rating in CTR?

If you're a new to *Children's Technology Review*, you may wonder why our ratings might be different than in other publications, or perhaps Apple's app store. The answer lies in CTR's evaluation instrument, online at <http://childrenstech.com/evaluation-instrument> and on page 7. The instrument is our DNA because it helps us spot attributes associated with increased child engagement; another word for "quality." We use this instrument every day as we encounter each new wave of unknown products that promise to entertain and educate a child. We openly share this instrument with publishers and our readers in order to help everyone better understand the in-exact craft of assigning ratings. Every so often, it makes sense to revisit our rating process. See page 7.

Your Subscription is Your Key to 10087 Archived Reviews

Your paid \$24 or \$108 subscription to CTR includes exclusive password access to the *Children's Software Finder (TM)* database—a collection of reviews going back to 1985. If you've lost or forgotten your password, please call 800-993-9499 between 9-3 PM EST.

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EDITORIAL GUIDELINES. We want our readers to know that there are no ulterior motives behind our reviews. CTR follows a set of editorial guidelines found at (<http://childrenstech.com/editorial-guidelines/>). Highlights include:

- We don't sell software or profit from products that we review. Review copies of software are donated to Mediatech, a non-profit public technology center.
- We don't distribute/trade or sell subscriber information.
- Contributors are required to disclose bias.
- There is no sponsored or advertising content of any variety.

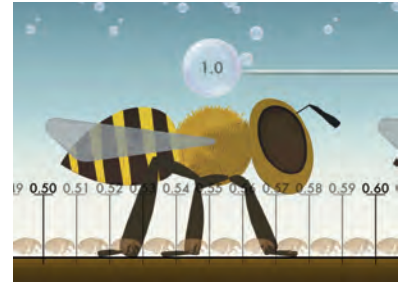
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- HearBuilder Software Series, www.superduperinc.com
- iDiary for Kids, www.tipitap.com
- Injini Child Development Game Suite, <http://www.injini.net>
- Memory (Pairs Matching Game), www.popappfactory.com
- MultiAlien, www.fogbridge.com
- Playstation Move Heroes, www.scea.com
- SpyClops Bionic Eye, www.jakkspace.com
- Toca Hair Salon, <http://tocaboca.com/>
- Toca Robot Lab, <http://tocaboca.com/>

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

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Products are tested and stored for public access and research at the Mediatech Foundation (www.mediatech.org), 118 Main Street, Flemington NJ, a non-profit organization.



Sites and videos about

BATTERIES

If somebody gave you a lemon, could you make a battery? Do you know which batteries don't need to be recycled -- and which do? Should you store unused batteries in the freezer? Let's learn more about the often overlooked workhorse of all gadgets: the battery.

1. Who invented the battery? In what year?

- a) 1748, Benjamin Franklin.
- b) 1800, Alessandro Volta
- c) 1902, Thomas Edison



While Edison and Franklin were very interested in storing electricity -- Franklin even coined the word "battery" -- according to the Energizer learning center <http://bit.ly/nznnel> it was Italian Alessandro Volta who made the first "modern" battery by layering plates of silver and zinc in salt water. That's why electricity is measure in Volts.

2. Should you store your batteries in the freezer?

No way. It won't make them last any longer, at least according to Green Batteries <http://bit.ly/tQBSm>. You should also avoid cutting into a battery, because it probably contains acid.

3. My Wii remotes use a lot of AA batteries. Is it OK to throw them in the regular trash, or should they be recycled? Throw 'em in the trash. According to Duracell <http://bit.ly/4qKNdd> used Alkyl line batteries are safe for landfills and contain little metal that can be recycled.

Rechargeable and button cell batteries are another story. Stores that sell them are required to take them back. To see a list of recycling facilities near you, visit <http://www.call2recycle.org/> and enter your zip code.

4. Danger danger! What shouldn't you do with batteries?

a) put them in a campfire; b) cut them open; c) swallow them or d) All of the above. The answer is d) all of the above. Many batteries contain chemicals that could explode or burn you. Button cell batteries can be a great danger to babies and toddlers, who tend to put small things in their mouths. According to Consumer Reports <http://bit.ly/jc9xOg> these types of batteries are in musical greeting cards or toys like the Hexbugs, and must be used carefully around little kids.

5. How many charging cycles can a typical laptop battery handle?

If you said between 300 to 500 times, you'd be right. Learn more by taking this battery quiz, <http://bit.ly/qDFMB3>



APPLICATION. Here's how you can make your own battery out of a penny, nail, wire and lemon <http://bit.ly/bLDZw> or a tiny motor out of a battery, screw, wire and magnet (a single BuckyBall works) at <http://bit.ly/pzsC7>



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LITHIUM ION BATTERY CELLS...

...provide power to things like digital cameras, cell phones, laptops and cars. Visit the YouTube channel to learn where lithium comes from, and how it is turned into a thin sheet and coiled up in order in order to be made into a battery.


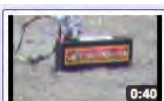

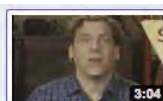




They can be recharged about 300 times. A laptop contains about six of these cells.

At <http://www.teslamotors.com>, you can learn about the Tesla sports car, which carries about 600 of these cells. After an overnight charge, you could drive about 300 miles. To follow the news about electric cars, visit <http://nyti.ms/pMGydd>



LittleClickers YouTube Playlist: Batteries

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1053947E7A36F6C4>

 The most simple motor in the world 0:20	 Lipo Battery Explosion 0:40	 How It's Made Recycling Car 4:56	 Volts Amps Watts 3:04	 How batteries work 2:07	 How To Make A Lemon Battery That 1:56	 How to Save iPhone 4 Battery Life 4:57	 Close Look \$110K Tesla Roadster 2:42
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See this page online, at <http://www.LittleClickers.com/lcbatteries911.html>

Peeking Under the Cloak of *Wizard101*

by Scott Traylor

Being the number one virtual world for kids is no small thing, especially in these days of Disney, Nick and Cartoon Network. But what's interesting about **Wizard101** (\$freemium, www.wizard101.com) is that 60% of visitors are playing with another member of their family (at least, according to the publisher sponsored study, at <http://prn.to/laV1Gh>). What are they doing right?

To find out, CTR correspondent Scott Traylor interviewed head wizards at KingsIsle: Josef Hall and Todd Coleman, on a quest for the magic formula. Note that portions of this interview have been condensed, and this interview is part of a larger report that is sold separately.

Where did the Wizard101 idea come from?

Josef Hall: We started talking about it seven years ago. I have three kids, they were young then, and I wanted them to have a safe and high-quality online game. Todd and I thought the children's space really seemed underserved. We wanted to make something that was triple-A, super high-quality. Something we could feel comfortable with our kids and other kids playing.

Todd Coleman: Josef and I were founders of another game company that made hardcore fantasy games with violence and mature themes. We were interested in going in a different direction, a more lighthearted approach to gaming through storytelling.

So the founders of KingsIsle brought you on and charged you with developing a virtual world product for them?

Todd: The story goes back earlier than that. Elie Akilian, our CEO and primary investor had an idea to create a new kind of game company. He talked to a dozen or more game companies to find a partner. At the same time he was searching for a partner, Josef and I were out talking to big publishing houses about a new kind of game we wanted to create. What's funny about both sides of that story, neither of us were finding traction. Elie found that game companies were mostly interested in making shooters or army games or post-apocalyptic games, hardcore games for hardcore players. When Josef and I were talking to studios, those were



*www.wizard101.com by KingsIsle
\$free with premium content sold for \$10 and up.
ESRB Rating: Everyone 10+*

the same types of games they wanted to fund. We stumbled into Elie who looked at us, having come out of the hardcore game space, now pitching a wizard game for the family, and it became apparent we should join forces.

From the beginning the idea was to create a family-based wizarding world, even before KingsIsle was formed?

Todd: Yes, in fact if you go back and read the high concept document that Josef and I put together, it's amazing how much of that original vision is exactly the same as what we created.

How long were you in development?

Josef: About two and a half years before we went into alpha with friends and family.

Todd: And another eight weeks before we went live.

Did the masses come right away?

Todd: It took time. It was about six months of steady growth, but we hadn't yet hit the tipping point. That was in December 2008 when it started to pick up steam.

Josef: We did some national television advertising, then things really took off. We started growing quickly around that time, and we knew we had something special.

How has Wizard101 changed since you launched?

Josef: The game has stayed true to what it was when we launched, but we've added a lot of things, like a housing system and gardening. Everything has kind of the wizard slant. The gardening's not a normal gardening system. You grow funny plants that have a lot of character and personality, like Couch Potatoes which are little spuds sitting on couches watching TV and talking to each other. The Couch Potatoes are little spuds sitting on couches watching TV and talking to each other. It's all very tongue-in-cheek. We've added a pet system where you can own pets and grow them through different in-game mini games. We've also added a lot of new worlds, some are pretty big departures from the existing world, like Celestia, which is underwater.

Editor's note: Most of these are premium features, available only with a code that costs up to \$39. That's the magic of Wizard101's business model. See the gift card (left).



Continued

Have you learned anything surprising about your audience?

Todd: It's a wider age spectrum than we expected. We started hearing grandparents were getting into the game, using it as a way to stay connected to their grandchildren. This was really surprising and just really cool to us. It's something you can't predict going in. You sit down, make the best game you can, and what you don't really have control over is player behaviors. Players come into this empty world you crafted. They bring their own hopes and expectations and experiences and relationships. Then the world starts to take on a life of its own. It's an amazing thing to watch.

How has the business of virtual worlds changed in the last few years?

Todd: Back when we started Wizard, the biggest game at the time was EverQuest, having amassed 400 thousand people. The prevailing thought in the industry at the time was any new virtual worlds to come out would simply carve up the same base of 400 thousand players. Then World of Warcraft launched and started racking up millions upon millions of players. All of a sudden people realized there was a new market. After that, the free-to-play model started in Asia. When it first came to the US, people thought that model would never fly, and of course that was not the case. Today you're seeing these very casual games pop up on Facebook, and people who never considered themselves gamers, hundreds of millions of people, are now playing on a daily basis. Using those games as a way to connect with their friends.

What was your single biggest moment in the Wizard101 history?

Josef: One that jumps to mind was early on in development I came home and all the computers were taken over by my wife and kids. They were so deep into the game nobody noticed I came in the door. They were laughing and talking to each other, running around in the game. I knew at that moment we had built something that was a lot of fun for my family and would be fun for other families too. It was a wonderful moment.

Todd: My biggest moment was during development. I remember we had our first milestone, an internal test. We had created the art pieces and had engineering working on the code and a design group working on the players and the characters and pulling it all together. We fired it up, and Josef and I were able to jump in for the first time and play. It was that vision we had, taken from a "Wouldn't it be cool?" conversation to actually seeing it on the screen. It was buggy, the sound wasn't working, the cinematics were too long, the cameras weren't working, but looking past all those warts and seeing it, at that moment I knew it was going to work. Josef and I were like, "Okay, we've got something here." I think it was two in the morning. But that moment, you turn that corner and know you've gone from an idea to an actual game. Nothing beats that.

Want more? We don't think an article about virtual worlds would be complete -- without a velvet rope. For the complete Wizard101 interview, purchase Scott's newest Q2 virtual world report. Contact him at scott@360kid.com.



ABOUT SCOTT: Scott Traylor is the founder and Chief Kid of 360KID (www.360KID.com), a youth focused business that consults in the kids digital world as well as develops successful consumer and classroom products for its clients.

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT OF BIAS: "I have no business relationship with the products mentioned in this report."

Dust or Magic

Don't Miss The Eleventh Annual Dust or Magic Institute!

"An idea can turn from dust to magic, depending upon the talent that rubs against it."

*Matsu Basho, with modifications**

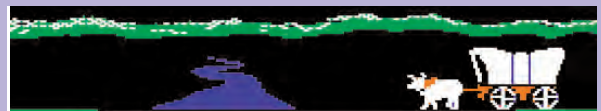
Where? The Inn at Lambertville Station, Lambertville, NJ (about one hour from Newark Airport)



When? November 6-8, Sunday evening through Tuesday afternoon.

Cost & Registration: \$1480 for one seat, \$990 for 2-5, and group size is limited to 60 on a first come, first served basis. Graduate Continuing Credit for Dust or Magic is the equivalent to a 3 credit college class in the Design of Children's Interactive Media from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education.

Who? Don't miss Don Rawitsch, Oregon Trail Co-



Inventor, who will give a Sunday night talk called **My Brush With History – The Invention and Impact of Oregon Trail!**

Learn more at <http://www.dustormagic.com>

Children's Interactive Media Rating Instrument

Children's Technology Review is an ongoing systematic study of children's interactive media products that started in 1985. The reviews and ratings are stored in a database (n = 12,746 as of September 2011). Of these, 10,087 have been published, with 8,366 ratings generated using this instrument. Subscribers are given access to the set of published reviews -- income that helps to sustain the research. The six categories in the instrument are designed to better understand factors that may be related to quality in a children's interactive media product. Key: N = Never or 0 points; SE = Some Extent, or .5 points; A = Always, or 1 point. NA = Not Counted in the Calculation.

I. Ease of Use (Can a child can use it with minimal help?)

Note that this factor is combined with Childproof on the short form of this instrument.

N SE A NA

1. _____ Skills needed to operate the program are in range of the child.
See <http://bit.ly/4tE7i>
2. _____ Children can use the program independently after the first use
3. _____ Accessing key menus is straightforward. See <http://bit.ly/qzGGUj>
4. _____ Reading ability is not prerequisite to using the program
5. _____ Graphics make sense to the intended user
6. _____ Printing/saving routines are simple
7. _____ It is easy to get in or out of any activity at any point
8. _____ Getting to the first menu is quick and easy
9. _____ Controls are responsive to the touch
10. _____ Written materials are helpful
11. _____ Instructions can be reviewed on the screen, if necessary
12. _____ Children know if they make a mistake
13. _____ Icons are large and easy to select with a moving cursor
14. _____ Installation procedure is straightforward

II. Childproof (Is it designed with child-reality in mind?)

1. _____ Survives the "digital playdoh test." See <http://bit.ly/pbNuNR>
2. _____ Offers quick, clear, obvious response to a child's action
3. _____ The child has control over the rate of display
4. _____ The child has control over exiting any activity at any time
5. _____ The child has control over the order of the display
6. _____ Title screen sequence is brief or can be bypassed
7. _____ When a child holds a key down, the intended number of inputs are generated
8. _____ External links are kept away from children. See <http://bit.ly/ea9cui>
9. _____ Children know when they've made a mistake
10. _____ This program would operate smoothly in a home or classroom setting

III. Educational (What does a child walk away from the experience with, that they didn't have when the first came to the experience?)

1. _____ Offers a good presentation of one or more content areas
2. _____ Graphics do not detract from the program's educational intentions
3. _____ Feedback employs meaningful graphic and sound capabilities
4. _____ Speech is used
5. _____ The presentation is novel with each use
6. _____ Good challenge range (this program will grow with the child)
7. _____ Feedback reinforces content (embedded reinforcements are used)
8. _____ Program elements match direct experiences
9. _____ Content is free from gender bias
10. _____ Content is free from ethnic bias
11. _____ A child's ideas can be incorporated into the experience
12. _____ The program comes with strategies to extend the learning beyond the screen
13. _____ There is a sufficient amount of content considering the cost

IV. Entertaining (Is this program fun to use?)

1. _____ The program is enjoyable to use
2. _____ Graphics are meaningful and enjoyed by children
3. _____ This program is appealing to a wide audience
4. _____ Children return to this program time after time
5. _____ Random generation techniques are employed in the design
6. _____ Audio/speech and sounds are meaningful to children
7. _____ Challenge is fluid, or a child can select own level.
8. _____ The program is responsive to a child's actions
9. _____ The theme of the program is meaningful to children. See <http://bit.ly/qp0wOT>

V. Design Features (How smart is this program?)

1. _____ The program has speech capacity
2. _____ Has printing/saving capacity
3. _____ Keeps a record of child's work
4. _____ Branches automatically: challenge level is fluid
5. _____ A child's ideas can be incorporated into the program.
6. _____ Sound can be toggled or adjusted
7. _____ Feedback is customized in some way to the individual child
8. _____ Teacher/parent options are easy to find and use

VI. Value (How much does it cost vs. what it does? Is it worth it?)

Considering the factors rated above, and the average retail price of product, rate the relative value considering the current market

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (points)
LOW HIGH

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How Does a Product Get a 5 Star Rating?

Because interactive media is so diverse, no single checklist that can capture all the possible attributes of quality. However, there are some common general attributes of products that that capture in the instrument . Most of these are similar to teacher/child interactions that might be characterized as "quality" or "educational."

A five star product is one that —
★ increases feelings of child control. A child feels empowered, in control, or able to make things happen from the experience, rather than depowered, slowed down, or hindered by the experience.
★ provides success in the first few seconds. We use a filter we call the MUC (Minimum User Competency) to help us gage the prerequisite skills that are required in order to succeed with an experience.

★ doesn't trap children. Children can always get out of what they get into.
★ looks good; sounds good. Today's hardware makes it possible to deliver "retina display" graphs, and surround sound audio.

★ innovative. We see dozens of games of concentration. We like to reward products that are the first to tap the potential of a new technology.
★ well leveled. As the child moves through the experience, they don't run into "hey mom" bottlenecks.
★ state-of-the-art. Makes use of the latest tools and techniques to reach the widest number of children.
★ is affordable. Compared to competitive products, the product delivers.

What attributes might earn low ratings?

★ talks too much.
★ sluggish, laggy, or less than crisp.
★ talks down to children, feels "sugary."
★ not well developmentally matched.
★ "homemade" feeling art, narration and/or music.
★ buggy, crashes, buffer problems.
★ typos, bad grammar and/or sloppy craftsmanship.
★ doesn't use the potential of the hardware and software.
★ competitive products cost less and do more. The free market can be a cruel place, but a 4 year old doesn't care

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Generating Star Ratings

Step 1. Count the number of items in the category, then add up the total points. Divide, and multiply by 100 to get the percent.

Step 2. Divide by .5 to convert the overall percent to the 1 to 5 star rating.

Step 3. Use the "NA" field carefully. It can be a particularly powerful tool to influence the overall score.

Step 4. Compare your score with another rater. Don't forget that this form offers a generic perspective on all forms of interactive media. Becoming a master rater with a high level of external validity requires practice. This means looking at many products that vary in quality. In addition, child testing is extremely helpful.



Feature Reviews

SEPTEMBER 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.

01 Kids Builder: Joy Preschool

Made in China with a broken-English narrator as proof, this iPad app uses tried-and-true techniques to present children with multiple-choice-style shape matching problems. Content is based on 14 geometric shapes. While the design isn't flashy, this app wastes little time getting to the matching. In addition, subtle animated routines are shown on each screen to keep things interesting. For example, a gopher might pop out of a hole and grab a fallen apple.

First, you touch one of six areas, with eight scenes full of shapes. The idea is to build a house by touching each shape, to hear it labeled. Correct answers are rewarded with praise in broken English ("you did it!") and lollipops. A review mode lets children touch the shapes in the sky, where they are rewarded by fireworks. If you don't mind the strange narration and flashcard-style interactivity, this app could work.

Details: Joy Preschool Game, www.jptang.net. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: geometric shapes (circle, trapezoid, triangle), logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 8/1/2011. [WB]

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

82%



Berenstain Bears' Bedtime Battle, The

This is the first of the Berenstain Bears to be adapted for multi-touch tablets by Oceanhouse Media.

In the 33 screen story, it's bedtime for Brother Bear and Sister Bear, but they have other plans such as playing with dinosaurs, having a tea party and getting a piggyback ride from Papa Bear. When Papa Bear announces that it's bedtime, the bedtime battle begins.

Features include Auto Play, which plays like a movie by automatically reading and turning pages; Read To Me, which allows children to listen to the narrated story with words highlighted as they are read; and Read It Myself, which lets children read the book in its traditional format.

Other features include original artwork, the option to touch any word to have it spoken, word highlighting, audio narration and scene-by-scene custom background audio. If you hold your finger over a paragraph, the entire block of text is read fluently. In addition, words zoom up when pictures are touched, following the tried-and-true Oceanhouse Media format.

All in all, this app does a good job of not getting in the way of the charm of the original story and illustrations, while supporting an early reader.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPhone, iPad*, Android. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 8/29/2011. [WB]

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

94%





Chuck and Friends: Friends for the Long Haul

Designed for elementary age readers, this 70 page/screen book contains embedded spelling games.

The story is based on content from HUB TV and Hasbro toys, so it will appeal to children who like vehicles. You should, however, note the commercial tie in, although we did not notice any overt selling.

In the story, Chuck and friends are playing a game of chase when they encounter Flip, a new vehicle in the scrap yard. Chuck is not so sure about Flip and challenges him to a stunt contest. In the process, the two realize they can work together and become fast friends.

Features include 70 pages of read-aloud content with narrative-driven matching, touch and reveal graphics and spelling activities that teach letter recognition, picture/word association and basic problem solving. It is possible to read and record your own voice on each screen and a slider bar makes navigation fast and easy.

Words are highlighted as Chuck tells the story, enhancing basic reading comprehension, and randomized activities provide multiple learning adventures. All in all, this is an excellent reading comprehension app for older readers.

Details: Ruckus Mobile Media, www.ruckusmobilemedia.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 7-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading comprehension, memory. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 6/15/2011. [WB]

ExerBeat

This mid-quality exercise program contains 155 exercises in eight categories including Hip Hop, Latin Dance, Aerobics, Boxercising, Karate, Karate Forms, Yoga/Pilates and Stretching.

After you construct a profile, you are given a lesson on each exercise. Next, you follow along with an on-screen coach, moving the Wii Remote to the rhythm, although there are many times when there seems like there is no connection between your movement and the screen.

The number of calories burned as well as METs (intensity of the workout) are displayed for each exercise. It is possible to create a custom profile, and high scores are kept. A two player mode lets a second person join in, say, to try for a higher score. Other features include the Around the World mode -- your Mii travels around the globe based on your workout progress -- as well as graphs and calendars to keep track of each person's progress. A party mode contains exercises for kids. ExerBeat is compatible with both the Wii Balance Board and Wii MotionPlus.

Details: Namco Bandai Games America Inc., www.namcobandai.com. Price: \$20. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Wii. Teaches/Purpose: physical fitness. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.8 stars. Entry date: 5/25/2011. [WB]

HearBuilder Software Series

Home schoolers or classroom teachers take note: This CD (remember those?) based series of four well designed titles is like putting a personalized language tutor inside your computer. The well designed set of exercises drill with arcade-style games -- a tried-and-true formula that keeps children on task.

There are four titles: Phonological Awareness, Following Directions, Sequencing, and Auditory Memory. In Phonological Awareness, children play instruments and form a rock band while learning to segment, blend and manipulate sounds. In Sequencing, children are shown a set of cards depicting an event, such as building a snowman, and are asked to drag and drop the cards in the correct order. The cards contain print, which can be read aloud as each word is highlighted.

The home editions (\$70) track up to four children. A Professional Edition is designed for unlimited users. Titles like this one represent the end of the printed workbook.

Details: Super Duper Publications, www.superduperinc.com. Price: \$70 each. Ages: 4-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language, sequencing, memory. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 7/6/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	92%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	



Ease of Use	7	76%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	8	

ESRB Rating: Everyone



Ease of Use	8	86%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	8	





iDiary for Kids

Turn your iPad into a password-protected journal with iDiary for Kids, a well designed app that makes it easy to type in notes or capture snapshots.

If you can type with the iPad's keyboard, you can easily setup a new account -- just put in your email address and make a password. It is possible to create multiple journals, giving this app utility for classroom use. Just remember that each user must log out when finished.

It is then possible to make daily entries, or if you like, jump a week ahead to make notes. Besides the ability to type, you can make sketches or put in images from your iPad's existing photo library. The drawing tools include multiple colors and stickers. Entries can be shared by email. The help system uses recorded voice prompts. Other features include a scrapbook and address book, support for new iOS features such as AirPrint, the ability to back-up and restore individual user data to a computer, and multi-user password protection. It is not possible to capture audio or video recordings. All in all, this is a nicely designed note taking program that could be useful in a classroom setting.

Details: Tipitap Apps, www.tipitap.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: writing, creativity. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 7/8/2011. [WB]

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



Injini Child Development Game Suite

Nine carefully crafted, multi-level learning games are designed for young children with special needs. But they could be used in regular ECE settings as well. In other words, ECE teachers, take note of this app, which is a great example of a well designed app.

Designed to be early intervention tools, this \$50 app is designed to "reinforce fine motor and language skills, understanding of cause and effect, spatial awareness, memory and visual processing."

Content consists of 100 puzzles of varying difficulty; more than 50 hand-painted tracing game illustrations; eight farm-themed mini-games; scaffolding methodology to support successful game playing and subtle level changes to support different stages of development. There are also short tutorials that model how to play each game.

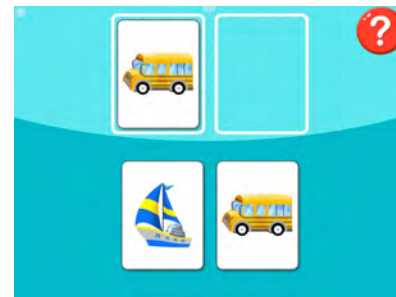
A subtle pause and exit button make it possible to stop a game at any point and return to the main menu. You have the option of showing children where these buttons are. Activities include: Balloons - pop balloons of varying colors and shapes and hear their shape labeled, Farm - eight games on a farm (one per animal) designed to let children explore as they shear sheep, wash pigs, or plant flowers; Find It - follow instructions and distinguish between everyday objects to help the girl find the items she asks for; Frog - draw a path for a frog's tongue to catch as many bugs as possible; Matching - find and tap the matching picture card to make a pair; Pattern - find what comes next in a pattern of shapes and colors; Puzzle - complete simple jigsaw puzzles; Squares - a memory game where you tap squares in the order that they were highlighted; and Tracing - practice fine motor skills by moving the ball along the path and see the picture that magically appears.

There is no record keeping, and progress is not saved, even though there is a progress meter for many of the games. Options let you change the voice of the narrator (male or female), adjust the menu design for more or less options, toggle a "pause" button, or toggle a count down feature. The music at the main menu can be distracting. Children are given a wide range of activities for each game.

The publisher plans on creating future game additions as part of the price through app updates, making it a lifetime membership and avoiding the need for in-app purchases. Created by NCSoft for Project Injini. Available for iPad and iPad 2, requires iOS 4.3.

Details: Project Injini, http://www.injini.net. Price: \$50. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: special needs, logic, language, cause and effect, spatial relations, memory. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 8/25/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	92%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	8	





Kung Fu Panda 2

Kick and punch your way to victory as you try to save the art of Kung Fu with Po and the Furious Five in this one player fighting game. Besides being good for gross motor coordination, there's no other learning value.

You play as Po (a panda) and try to become a Kung Fu master by taking on enemies that vary in ability. This requires carefully timed punches and kicks and, with the Kinect version, plenty of room for this type of activity.

Our testers were less than thrilled with the Kinect version, despite the good looking graphics and movie-like narration. "It is hard to know what you're supposed to do" and "I don't like all the steps required with getting started."

The Wii version uses the uDraw Tablet, letting you customize your environment and control Po using the stylus; the DS version also gives you the ability to level up and choose from an array of moves as you perform team attacks. Note that the ratings apply only to the Kinect version; we did not test other platforms. Prices are \$50 for the Xbox Kinect, \$40 for the PS3, and \$30 for the Wii and Nintendo DS.

Details: THQ, www.thq.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Xbox Kinect*, Wii, PlayStation 3, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: fighting, lower body coordination, gross motor movement. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.5 stars. Entry date: 5/25/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	5	70%
Educational	N	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	7	

ESRB Rating: Everyone 10+, Cartoon Violence



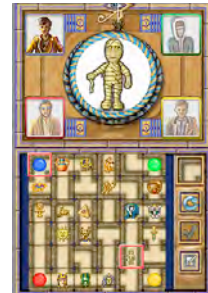
Labyrinth

A faithful adaptation of "The aMAZEing Labyrinth" board game, in which you slide in and out tiles to create and change a dynamic maze and collect treasures before the other players. While the game does come with a single-player campaign and computer opponents, kids often lose interest pretty quickly without someone else to play with and the lack of any "undo" function can become frustrating. Fortunately, the game has hot-seat multiplayer (with kids passing around the DS for their separate turns) as well as single-card and multi-card multiplayer with multiple DS's. However, the lack of variety within the game itself (it offers several "worlds" that are merely changes of the unimpressive artwork) keeps us from recommending it more strongly. If you like the board game it's based on, it's worth a buy to have it so conveniently and portably. Otherwise at \$20, borrow it.

Details: Mentor InterActive, www.mentorinteractive.com. Price: \$20. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: Puzzle board game. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3 stars. Entry date: 7/21/2011. [AB]

Ease of Use	8	60%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	4	
Good Value	3	

ESRB Rating: Everyone, Mild Violence





LeapPad Explorer

In the beginning, LeapFrog, Inc. made the LeapPad (in 1999) and then Leapsters (in 2003). Many years later, Apple, Inc. made a tablet that they named iPad (2010).

In a lucky twist of fate for Leapfrog's marketing department, they had used the word "Pad" in a device name 11 years before Apple's wildly popular iPad. So when the time came to (2011) to dust off the aging Leapster, a little name recycling was all that was needed. The only problem is that the LeapPad Explorer has no resemblance to the original print-based LeapPad. Here's a closer look at the LeapPad Explorer.

With a shape that can slide into a large pocket, the new LeapPad Explorer is based on the discontinued didj (2008) operating system. It is also a clean break from the Leapster of the past because it no longer runs the older cartridges.

If it were five years ago, Leapster Explorer's bright 5 inch color touch screen/camera combo would be impressive. Today, however, kids have many similar options, especially the iPod Touch, iPad and Nintendo DS. Consider also that \$20 (the cost of just one Leapster cartridge) can buy a lot of iTunes apps.

Features include a 5 inch color screen, accelerometer (for tilt input), monotouch screen with tethered stylus, d-pad controls and a single, front-facing camera. There's also a USB plug to connect to your computer (needed to download apps), a rather low res but fully functional camera, 2 GB of memory and no SD card expansion. For sound, there's a microphone (in) and headphone jack and speakers (out). It is powered by 4 AA batteries.

Software is managed the old fashioned way -- by plugging in a \$20 cartridge (sold at retail) or downloaded at less cost by tethering the device to a Windows or Macintosh computer. By year's end (holiday 2011) the software library will include about 80 "apps" that will include 14 onboard LeapPad activities, 20 cartridges and 50 learning games that can be downloaded by way of the USB port, when plugged into a host computer. We tried all the onboard games and noted that the quality varied (hence the 4.1 rating).

Weaknesses include the pushy cartoonish introductions in many of the activities, which might include background music that can't be muted. The worst case is the Art Studio. The monotouch screen also feels sluggish which is illustrated when you try to quickly draw a curved line (you get jagged edges). In the Roly Poly Picnic game, you're supposed to tilt the screen to move a ball through a maze, but the ball is hard to control.

Strengths include the ability to customize the entire experience for a child using the three sign profiles. The camera also should not be overlooked, especially because pictures can be edited directly on the large screen, and it is possible to record video.

Despite costing about \$20 more than the Vtech InnoTab, LeapPad Explorer is a viable option for parents looking for a safe "gated community" of generally educational games, with an ever-present "home" button that frees a child from feeling trapped.

Details: Leapfrog, www.leapfrog.com. Price: \$100. Ages: 4-up. Platform: Smart Toy, Leapster. Teaches/Purpose: all school subjects. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 2/11/2011. [WB]

MathBlaster.com

Slow loading and lacking any math facts practice that we could find (in the free version, anyway), MathBlaster.com is a 3D virtual world where you are sent on various missions.

The idea is to join the Intergalactic Space Patrol (ISP), a team of Blasters sworn to explore and protect the universe. MathBlaster.com requires the installation of the Unity 3D engine. The free version teases children, by giving them a baby pet but not letting it grow without a visit to the incubator. It's only after you've found the incubator that you learn that it is reserved for paying members. In addition, moving from area to area subjects you to long loading times.

Details: Knowledge Adventure, Inc., www.knowledgeadventure.com. Price: \$7.99/month. Ages: 6-12. Platform: Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: math facts. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 2.4 stars. Entry date: 8/29/2011. [WB]

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



Ease of Use	5	48%
Educational	4	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	4	
Good Value	4	





MathTastic Addition

Turn your iPad into a small chalk board and your finger into a piece of chalk, with this addition toolkit. Content starts with single digits and moves you through ten levels of addition mastery. Once you've solved the problem with the "chalk" you enter your answer using a digital numerical keypad. Note that the chalk served only as a scratch pad -- the iPad doesn't know what you're writing. This app makes you type the digits from left to right only; there is no option for changing the order the numerals are entered which is hard for column-based adding.

Correct answers let you try a harder problem. Help is provided with links to five video tutorials on addition from the Khan Academy. An Internet connection is required. See also MathTastic Subtraction.

Details: Brainzai!, <http://brainzai.com/>. Price: \$free. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math, addition. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.8 stars. Entry date: 8/26/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	75%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	5	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	N	



MathTastic Subtraction

Turn your iPad into a small chalk board and your finger into a piece of chalk, with this free subtraction toolkit. Content starts with single digits and moves you through ten levels of addition mastery. Once you've solved the problem with the "chalk" you enter your answer using a digital numerical keypad. Note that the chalk served only as a scratch pad -- the iPad doesn't know what you're writing. This app makes you type the digits from left to right only; there is no option for changing the order the numerals are entered which is hard for column based subtraction.

Correct answers let you try a harder problem. Help is provided with links to five video tutorials on subtraction from the Khan Academy. An Internet connection is required. See also MathTastic Addition.

Details: Brainzai!, <http://brainzai.com/>. Price: \$free. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math, subtraction. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.8 stars. Entry date: 8/26/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	75%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	5	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	N	



Memory (Pairs Matching Game)

This is a cleanly designed, customizable game of concentration that works well on the iPad's touch screen. There are three challenge levels -- a 4x2 grid with 4 pairs of picture cards; a 6x4 grid with 12 pairs; and an 8x5 grid with 20 pairs.

A correct match displays the name of the animal in one of five user-chosen languages - English, Spanish, French, Russian or Ukrainian - and is also pronounced in that language.

An important feature of this app is the ability to make new cards from pictures in your iPad's photo library. To import a picture, you touch a thumbnail, crop and rotate as needed, type in a name, and record up to 5 seconds of your own narration about the picture. So, for example, it is possible for a teacher to put in items or children from his or her classroom, making this much more than your typical concentration game.

Details: PopApp Factory, www.popappfactory.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: memory logic, language (English, Spanish, French, Russian or Ukrainian). Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 5/4/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	92%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	





Motion Math Zoom

This innovative math app turns your iPad into a stretchable number line, letting children freely play with the relationship between quantity and space, just like silly putty. This "virtual manipulative" ability is combined with a game -- a series of timed challenges that ask you to find a mark on the line. The faster you find the mark, the higher your score. Unfortunately, the only way to get this app is as a free sample that consisting of just level 1 of the 24 levels. To continue, you need to use an in-app sales feature to pay \$4.99. This puts a teacher in the awkward position of needing to temporarily turn off the in-app sales feature on their classroom iPads.

The educational potential of this app is huge. As you zoom in or out, you discover that there are smaller units (e.g., tenths) in between the ones. Zoom in further, to find hundredths. Because each unit is illustrated visually, to scale, with bugs and animals, the abstract integers, negatives, and fractions have instant meaning to children. After all, everyone knows that a bee is a lot smaller than a rhinoceros.

The game starts when a bubble floats down from the top of the screen, with a number, like 1.2. Your job is to swipe up or down the number line to find the safe landing spot (in this case, on the 1.2 inches). Scale is shown by creatures lined up along the number line from fleas (for the hundredths), to bees, to rhinos for larger units. Things get harder with correct answers, so you want to see how many points you can earn, and levels you can unlock. Hints are provided for children who are struggling. Also, there's a time element. You have to find the bubble's landing spot before a slowly moving, very sharp looking needle (a great metaphor) pops it and you have to start over. Progress is saved automatically in leaderboard fashion, and the content management screen looks a lot like Cut the Rope or Angry Birds.

Because this "free" version uses in-app sales without first disclosing the price (\$5), the pedagogy is mixed with a profit motive, two things that generally don't mix well in learning settings. For the purposes of this review, the ratings apply to the design, not the business practice. We're hopeful there will be a will soon be an honest "full" \$4.99 version, sans gimmicks.

Details: Motion Math Games, www.motionmathgames.com. Price: \$free, \$5 for upgrade. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math, number lines, decimals to the thousandths. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 9/5/2011. [WB]

MultiAlien

Looking for a way to make addition and multiplication math fact practice fun? Here's a very engaging solution.

Your goal is to shoot math answers from the sky. You aim by leaning left or right. To fire, you must choose from three triggers (each with a different number). If the number matches the math equation displayed on the alien spaceship, your bullets will cause damage. If you shoot with the wrong answer, the ship gets stronger. As you increase in levels you can get more lives, ship shields and machine guns.

Weaknesses include an inability to choose math problems, other than addition or multiplication. As an arcade game, this app is a lot of fun. It is well worth the \$.99.

Details: Fogbridge Corporation, www.fogbridge.com. Price: \$.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: math facts, multiplication, addition. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 8/26/2011. [WB]

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



Ease of Use	8	88%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	9	





Mystery Case Files: The Malgrave Incident

In this seek and solve game you must unravel the mystery behind the Malgrave Island by using the Wii Remote to search for clues, solve puzzles and find concealed items in multilayered hidden object scenes. These three layered scenes require you to zoom and scroll to find certain objects, and each scene contains an inventory item that helps you access new areas, solve other puzzles and solve the mystery. The game features a hint button in the form of an on-screen magnifying glass that you can use to highlight the area surrounding certain objects. There are three multiplayer modes for up to four players, consisting of three rounds, and you can choose options such as skill level. Multiplayer games include: Swift Pick - compete to find hidden objects; Tick Tick Pick - find hidden objects and pass the bomb before it explodes; and Classic Pick - race to find the most hidden objects. In addition, the game features an Adventure Mode allowing up to four people to play cooperatively to solve the multilayered hidden object scenes, with the main player controlling the camera and additional players joining in at any time during gameplay. Developed by Big Fish Games, Inc. exclusively for the Nintendo Wii.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Wii. Teaches/Purpose: logic, problem solving, memory, deductive reasoning. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 6/23/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	80%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	8	

ESRB Rating: Everyone, Fantasy Violence
Alcohol Reference, Tobacco Reference



Phil and Freddy Go to Nashville

This 16 page ebook mixes home-made art and sounds with the story of two frogs, Phil and Freddy on their quest to become country music stars.

Each page contains musical skits that are far from professional sounding.

Children can touch a paragraph of text to hear it read aloud. The app is the second book in the Phil and Freddy series. Created by Mike Rigsby and Erya Cash.

Details: Authors With Apps, <http://www.misterengineer.com>. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 2.8 stars. Entry date: 8/25/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	55%
Educational	5	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	2	
Good Value	6	



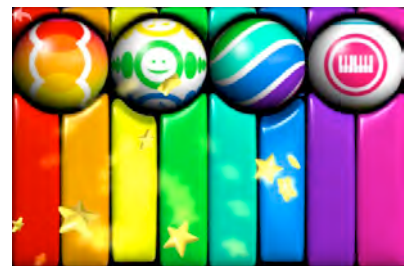
Phil and Freddy follow the music to the show. They clap and cheer after every song. "That looks like fun," says Phil. "Let's be country stars." "Okay," agrees Freddy.

PianoBall - Fun with Learning

Turn your iPad screen into a musical busy box. There are two types of keyboards -- one with eight large, colored keys. As a child explores, there are four roller balls that serve as controls to change the pitch or color of the keys. The colors and instrument sounds are spoken (e.g., xylophone, piano, drum set, and saxophone) and a Rainbow Ball changes the colors of the keys. A follow the bouncing ball (in this case floating little stars) mode leads children through simple nursery rhymes. The idea is good, but the experience can seem cluttered, and the main menu too frequently leads to external links. A set of parent options lets you lock these options, but could be easier to figure out. In a way, this app is so simple that it's complicated to use. Still, if you can get a child past the first menu, it could be a good music experience.

Details: 4baam, www.4baam.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 6 mos - up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: music exploration. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 6/14/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	80%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	9	





Playstation Move Heroes

Fun and full of challenges, this one or two player game brings together four characters from Ratchet and Clank, Jak & Daxter, and Sly Cooper. They work together (you can choose who to play) to compete in a series of challenges using the PlayStation Move controller (required).

In the story, aliens have swiped chunks of the worlds of Ratchet, Jak and Sly in order to create a mysterious new planet in the galaxy. After they are abducted to this new world, Ratchet, Clank, Jak, Daxter, Sly Cooper and Bentley compete in competitions. You can use a variety of weapons including Ratchet & Clank's combustor, Sly Cooper's cane and super power weapons that are customized to each character. Medals are earned for completing missions and challenges; and the more medals you earn the more missions you unlock. For example, in one game, you move around (using the controller) and then collect flying disks, which you throw and steer (using the Move controller) in order to hit targets. You end up using both controllers at the same time; which takes some getting used to.

PlayStation Network leaderboards show players how they stack-up against other players on the network; and a co-op gameplay mode is available. Developed by Nihilistic Software for Sony. If you're looking for healthy doses of the characters, you'll be disappointed, and if you don't mind the controller juggling, you'll find this game to be fun.

Details: Sony Computer Entertainment America, www.scea.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 10-up. Platform: PlayStation Move. Teaches/Purpose: logic, timing, strategy. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 6/9/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	8
Educational	N
Entertaining	9
Design Features	9
Good Value	9

88%



ESRB Rating: Everyone 10+



Simplex Spelling HD

Looking for some cut and dry spelling practice for the iPad? After you create a user account, you start working through a set of 25 word lists (about 10 words in each), spelling each one letter at a time while your progress is saved. The words are presented verbally and in a sentence. A keyboard is shown beneath the letter grid. Letters can be typed or dragged into place, and it is easy to get a hint or re-arrange the letters to make a word. The program remembers which words have been mastered. It appears easy to enter an entire classroom of names. A built in hint system makes it possible to get help at any time. The only drawback may be that this program can get tedious. Your reward for completing a set of words successfully? You get to complete another set of words. Options let you adjust the voice volume, toggle between US and Canadian English, turn on/off success messages, and change the keyboard case or layout (either alphabet or qwerty). The words all seem pretty easy -- the words on the hardest level include "about" and "laugh."

Details: Pyxwise Software Inc., <http://pyxwise.com/>. Price: \$6.99. Ages: 6-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: spelling, reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 8/29/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	8
Educational	9
Entertaining	6
Design Features	8
Good Value	9

80%



SpyClops Bionic Eye

First released in 2007 under the name "EyeClops TV Microscope" by Jakks Pacific, this year's edition has been simplified once again.

To use, you put in five AA batteries, plug the yellow composite video cable into your TV and start exploring specimens at 200x power. Objects are illuminated by three white LEDs.

The kit includes one SpyClops Bionic Eye, one Converter Unit and four top secret documents. While this is a must-have accessory for any classroom, there is one big drawback. There is no auto off feature. So if you leave the batteries on over the weekend, you have to come up with five fresh AA batteries to use.

Details: Jakks Pacific, Inc., www.jakksacific.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: science. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 8/30/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Educational	10
Entertaining	10
Design Features	7
Good Value	9

90%





StoryBox #1

Good for older readers (upper elementary and middle school) this children's magazine (by Bayard Presse) on an iPad mixes age-appropriate content with some mid-to good-quality interactivity. All things considered, there's enough content to keep things interesting and keep children exploring. There's no doubt that this is a British publication, and the narrator accent is proof. The idea is to continue stories from app to app, so there is continuity from issue to issue, like the printed counterpart. We reviewed the first issue (#1) so quality might improve.

At the core of each issue is an animated story. For this issue, "How about a MOOH?" is about Stella the little calf who wakes up but does not moo. The farm animals are worried but a little cuddle with her Mom is all she needs. We were less than impressed by the bobble-head-style of interactivity and unconventional page turns. Features include the ability to record your own voice, or zoom into illustrations for a closer look. The aesthetics are excellent (good graphics and narration).

Content also includes Science - Why do aeroplanes leave trails in the sky? (note the British spelling); SamSam - GumGum the giant - follow the cosmic adventures of the smallest of the big heroes plus watch an episode of the SamSam TV series; Animal world - learn about Humpback whales; Games - fly your kite, join the dots, maze, match the pairs, find the correct order; and Polo - an adventure without words to lead you into the world of dreams.

All in all, there's a lot of content to discover in this app, making it well worth the \$4 investment.

Details: Bayard Presse, www.bayard-magazines.co.uk. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, logic, creativity, counting. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 8/1/2011. [WB]

Toca Hair Salon

Here's a theme that works especially well with young children: getting a haircut. After you choose a customer from six possible human and animal options, you start combing, coloring and blow drying with your finger driving the action. The hair is a little hard to control, and the art is best described as irreverent, on par with other Toca apps.

Content includes 12 hair colors and five tools. The app features four characters, including animals, who make funny faces and sounds as you work on their hair cut.

If you're looking for a serious hair cutting app, you won't find it here. For a playful experience, however, you can't go wrong with this well designed, easy to control, playful app that follows in the tradition of other Toca Boca experiences.

You can also take pictures of your creations and save them. If you make a mistake, there's even a magic potion (called G.R.O.) to make the hair grow back again. If life were only so easy.

Details: Toca Boca, <http://tocaboca.com/>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: creativity. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 6/9/2011. [WB]

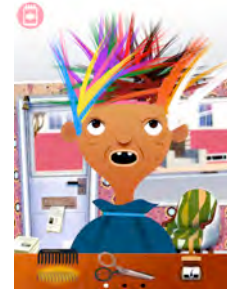
Ease of Use	8	86%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	8	



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



ESRB Rating:





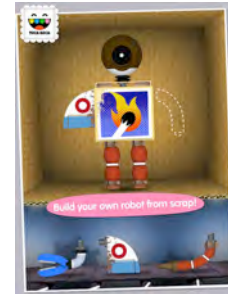
Toca Robot Lab

This brilliantly designed sandbox-style app designed for preschoolers mixes limited creativity with a maze type of flying game.

You start by making a robot by selecting legs, a body, a head and arms using multiple-choice style menus. Next, you are taken to the testing area, which consists of a maze with hidden stars. The goal is to fly your robot to a magnet by touching the screen to activate the foot rockets. The longer you press, the greater the power. You steer by moving your finger on the screen; a very easy process. The goal is to find all three hidden stars, but if you can't that's perfectly OK. There's no way to fail in this robot lab, and making the robots is fun because you never know what type of maze you'll get.

Details: Toca Boca, <http://tocaboca.com/>. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: logic, some creativity, spatial relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 8/25/2011. [WB]

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



Transformers: Dark of the Moon

Fun but expensive, this fast-paced shooting/fighting game gives you the fight you'd expect from a Transformer's game. In terms of innovation, however, there's not a lot to get excited about. In other words, there's a lot of games like this these days.

A new gameplay mechanic called Stealth Force lets you turn into a third, hybrid state that combines the weapons and firepower of Robot Mode with the agility and maneuverability of Vehicle Mode.

Environments include Jungles of Central America, Siberian military facilities, Urban Cityscapes, and more, along with a diverse roster of Transformers characters to choose from as you try to save mankind. The PS3, Xbox 360, and Wii versions also allow for you to compete with or against friends around the world in multiplayer modes.

There is a Nintendo 3DS version that we did not test. Developed by High Moon Studios for Xbox 360 and PS3 (\$60) and by Behavior Interactive for Nintendo Wii (\$50), 3DS (\$40) and DS (\$30). Note the Wii, 3DS and DS versions are rated e10+ for Fantasy Violence.

Details: Activision, Inc., www.activision.com. Price: \$60. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Wii, Nintendo DS, Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 6/23/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	86%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	8	

ESRB Rating: Teen, Violence



Trees Are Best FACT

Full of nice illustrations but limited interactivity, this picture book is designed to introduce facts about trees, in a playful way.

Each narrated page has one interactive element that you can try to discover on your own, or you can use a hint button to see where you should touch. You can also draw your own tree.

Written and illustrated by Firecatcher design studio and developed by hedgehog lab.

Details: hedgehog lab, <http://hedgehoglab.com>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: trees, ecology. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.6 stars. Entry date: 8/25/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	72%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	7	





VINCI Tab

VINCI Tab is a custom-made tablet for young children (ages 1 to 4) that comes bundled with a set of custom-made apps. It is easy to hold, thanks to a set of distinctive red handles, and wireless Internet features have been de-activated. The device itself is custom-made, based roughly on the specs of a Samsung Galaxy Tab; powered by an A9 processor running Android. It was designed by Dan Yang, a fiber-optic entrepreneur/parent. Standard features include a 3 megapixel camera (to be used for documenting your child's growth), volume control, lithium polymer batteries that promise "up to 9 hours" and charge when plugged into your Macintosh or Windows computer via USB port.

The 7 inch screen is about half the size of an iPad's and the protective soft-cornered handles make it easy to hold... or chew on.

As of the launch date (August 2011), VINCI's software library is limited, consisting of two exploration games, three ebooks and about ten songs and videos. These include Baby HaHa's Explorations in which a child can earn stickers by exploring in seven areas: a baby's room, a music room, zoo, farm, park, kitchen and aquarium. The activities follow tried-and-true formats, and vary in quality and level of child control. For example, you make multiple-choice style matches (e.g, a baby animal with it's mother) or play the piano by touching a keyboard. When playing the piano, for example, you feel as if the keys are sticky, and you're prompted to "press the green button to play the game." In "Baby HaHa Ugly Duckling," one of the ebooks, you have to wait for the narration to finish before you can start touching the ducks to explore their sounds. This less-than-responsive interactivity is important to consider when dealing with younger children. See for yourself at <http://bit.ly/nxOlqg>. Additional titles are planned so quality could change.

Additional activities, story books and music videos can be purchased via download by visiting the Online Store, found at <http://vincigenius.com/games/library>.

Details: Rullingnet Corporation, <http://vincigenius.com/vincitab>. Price: \$389. Ages: 1-3. Platform: Android. Teaches/Purpose: A handheld tablet for babies and toddlers. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.3 stars. Entry date: 1/11/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	66%
Educational	5	
Entertaining	6	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	5	





Future Releases

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.

ABC for Little Scientist

This ABC themed app pairs each letter with a science-related minigame. A is for Astronaut (drive the space ship, B is for Bacteria, and ... X is for X ray. Each letter also has a related routine and is pronounced out loud, used in a word, and repeated in a related sentence. In addition, each screen features objects that can be pinched, pushed, dragged or clicked in order to make them move, change, talk or make a noise. The app features science related questions such as "What is the largest ocean?"

Other features include the ability to toggle between male and female voices and both upper and lower case letters.

Details: Common Extract, www.CommonExtract.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: letters, phonics, memory. Entry date: 8/25/2011.

Ansel & Clair's Adventures in Africa

Full of facts about Africa, this app features Ansel, an inter-galactic travel photographer from the planet Virtoos who asks a lot of questions about things like hippos. The goal is to explore each area to collect lost parts to the spacecraft.

There are three areas to explore: the Nile Valley, Sahara Desert and Serengeti Plains. The app features games, puzzles and multiple levels. There's a lot more narration than things to actually do or explore.

Details: Cognitive Kid, Inc., <http://anselandclair.com>. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 4-9. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: geography, history, science. Entry date: 5/31/2011.



Cars 2 Racing Video Game

This battery powered stand-alone TV game plugs directly into the AV ports of your TV. No game console or computer is required.

Using the steering wheel, you control Lightning McQueen or Mater on several rather crude tracks. A gear shift lets you change speeds. As with all of JAKKS TV Games titles, the controller simply plugs into the A/V jacks of any standard TV and contains multiple games. Testers quickly gave up on this game, finding the cars too hard to control.

Details: Jakks Pacific, Inc, www.jakksacific.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 6-up. Platform: TV. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, car racing. Entry date: 8/31/2011.

FIFA Soccer 12

Virtual soccer keeps getting more real, thanks to improvements in the artificial intelligence. The 2012 FIFA title features a new Tactical Defending mode that "changes the approach to defending and puts equal importance on positioning, intercepting passes and tackling." The game gives you new ways to take on opponents, more time on the ball to make decisions, and complete control of the pace of the game. You can use close dribble touches in tight spaces, on the wings, and even while fending off an opponent.

Details: EA Sports - Electronic Arts Canada, www.eagames.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 8-up. Platform: PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Wii, iPhone, iPad, PSP, Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: soccer, sports. Entry date: 6/10/2011.





Fijit Friends

Fijit Friends are a set of four, rubbery-skinned robots that can detect voice prompts, the beat of songs, or special "sonic chirp" codes embedded in videos and sites.

Powered by five AA batteries, the 8-inch creature look like moving, very chatty Pillsbury Dough Boy figure that is covered with a squishy rubbery coating that is fun to squeeze.

A hidden microphone can hear sound codes that trigger behaviors. The Sonic Chirp technology is interesting because the toy can interact with external media, like TV commercials or YouTube videos. It is not unlike a technique used before in ike Microsoft's Actimates back in 1997, but instead of using high frequencies, you can hear these codes -- they sound like high pitched dial tones, and the certainly will catch the attention of any nearby cat. [Samples at <http://www.fijitfriends.com/extras.aspx>].

Besides the codes, Fijits also pick up the beat of a song and dance along, or they can recognize up to 30 words or phrases like "let's dance" and "who's there?" for knock knock jokes.

While Fijits can't walk, the pudgy toy can wobble and their heads move according to an external beat, which was on display in Times Square yesterday during a publicity stunt in which hundreds of Fijits were dancing in unison. One thing is certain -- this is one girl toy from Mattel that won't be criticized for its hour glass figure.

Details: Mattel, Inc., www.mattel.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: . Entry date: 7/18/2011.



Fooz Kids

Available in 36 languages, Fooz Kids attempts to let children create, connect, discover and learn in "an environment that is safe and age-appropriate."

Components include games, web browsing, videos, crafts, parent-approved e-mails to friends or family, the ability to create an avatar and customize a virtual bedroom. Fooz Kids University contains pre-K to 5 math games, plus reporting features for parents. Fooz Kids Flix contains "full length movies" that are "perfect for a car ride." Details about the movies are not provided. The Parental Dashboard is a password-protected area that enables parents to select age and gender-appropriate content for their children, monitor their academic activities, take a peek at their creations, access e-mails and approve friends.

Fooz Kids is available as a download for both Windows and Mac OS X operating systems and is also compatible with Android tablets. Fooz Kids is available for a one time purchase of \$11.99 with package subscriptions and additional features available for either a monthly or yearly commitment. For more information, or to download the application, visit <http://www.foozkids.com>.

Details: Fuhu, Inc., www.foozkids.com. Price: \$12 plus subscription. Ages: 5-12. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: a virtual world for children. Entry date: 8/13/2011.



Golden Tee Golf TV Game

Featuring a pool-ball sized trackball, this golf game plugs directly into your TV. For 1 to 4 players (turn based). Content includes several 18-hole courses including Heather Pointe, Palm Springs and Cumberland. This product was released in 2006 as Golden Tee Golf, Home Edition.

Details: Jakks Pacific, Inc, www.jakkspacific.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: golf. Entry date: 9/1/2011.



Kirby Wii

In this Kirby adventure, an alien spaceship crashes on Pop Star and its pieces are scattered throughout the land. You must guide Kirby as he retrieves the ship's parts and helps the aliens to return home to their planet. Up to three players can join you as Meta Knight, King Dedede and Waddle Dee to help Kirby in his quest. Kirby can utilize his powerful Copy Ability that allows him to inhale, spit and transform as he encounters enemies. He also has new abilities including: Sword - Kirby dons a green cap and wields a sword; Beam - Kirby wears a jester hat and can shoot energy from a magic wand; Whip - Kirby wears a cowboy hat and can lasso enemies; and Leaf - Kirby is surrounded by a whirlwind of leaves. The game also features new Super Abilities, which are activated when Kirby inhales special enemy characters. For example, the "Super Sword" Super Ability lets Kirby swing a giant sword and wipe out an entire screen's worth of enemies. Up to four players can play cooperatively to progress through the game and collect Point Stars and Ability Stars, and can also join and leave the game at any time. Developed by HAL Laboratory, Inc. and scheduled for release Fall 2011.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Wii. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 6/15/2011.



Learning to Get Along Series, The

Fifteen talking books run on Mac or Windows computers and come on CDs. Each uses a real-life situation to bring up topics such as tolerance, safety, honesty, kindness, and other social and emotional skills. There is one skill per book.

Parents and teachers can choose which books to make available and manage audio features like the reading pace of the narrator. It is also possible to track each reader's progress.

The software is adaptable to each child's needs and is designed to give as much or as little assistance as needed with the options of narration or silent reading, clickable word definitions, and reading comprehension quizzes at the end of each book. Prices are \$100 for single user, or \$250 for a school 5-pack.

Details: Free Spirit Publishing, www.freespirit.com. Price: \$100. Ages: 4-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: social and emotional skills. Entry date: 5/3/2011.



Madden NFL 12

Headlines for the 2012 edition in the Madden franchise include more accurate, easier controls with a new collision system, plus defensive A.I. enhancements.

Content includes team-specific items, including mascots and cheerleaders, broadcast cameras, 3D grass, and dynamic time-of-day.

The Franchise mode includes expanded rosters, a rookie scouting and a free-agent bidding system. The Superstar mode lets you control the growth of a player, letting you earn skill points by participating in practice and games. The Dynamic Player Performance feature allows a player's skills and confidence to rise and fall based on his performance throughout a game or in Franchise mode. See also NCAA Football 12.

Details: EA Sports (Electronic Arts Inc.), www.eagames.com. Price: \$60. Ages: 8-up. Platform: PlayStation 3, Xbox 360. Teaches/Purpose: sports, football. Entry date: 6/13/2011.





NCAA Football 12

Sports sims continue to expand, even moving to encompass the culture surrounding the sport. Case in point, this year's NCAA Football game that is designed to let you go from high school superstar to top college player, and eventually the head coach; providing your knees hold out.

Features include Coaching Carousel, where you roam the sidelines as a coach. While in this mode, you start as a coordinator and work your way up. In Conference Customization you create new rivalries and alter the landscape of college by realigning conferences throughout college football. You can build your own 16-team super conference, create conference schedules, and decide BCS bowl tie-ins. New pre-game traditions include the Sooner Schooner and Ramblin' Wreck.

The game also features a new momentum-based collision and tackling system that allows you to control a player through the moment of impact.

See also Madden NFL 12.

Details: EA Sports (Electronic Arts Inc.), www.eagames.com. Price: \$60. Ages: 8-up. Platform: PlayStation 3, Xbox 360. Teaches/Purpose: sports, football. Entry date: 6/10/2011.



Paper Jamz Microphone & Effects Amp

Consisting of a clip-on amp/battery pack and a wired microphone, the Paper Jamz microphone makes it possible to autotune your voice (WowWee calls it "Perfect Pitch technology") as you sing along to songs that you can transfer from your computer.

You can sing along to existing beats, or two included songs. Using the flat, printed controls that react to capacitive touch on the amp (hence the "paper"), you can change modes, including solo and duet modes (you can become the lead singer by turning the original vocal track off, or sing with the artist by turning it on); Auto-Harmony (doubles or triples your voice and shifts pitch to create perfect harmonies); Auto-Vibrato (adds vibrato to your voice); Chorus (multiplies your vocals to add depth); Auto (recreates original sounds of a song). You can also add songs from your own library Jamz Pro software. See also I Am T-Pain Mic (CTR April 2011).

Details: WowWee USA, Inc., www.wowwee.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: music, rhythm, singing, harmony. Entry date: 5/26/2011.



Puppies 3D

A family of cute puppies -- in 3D -- is coming to your Nintendo 3DS. They can be adopted, played with, exercised, trained and socialized. The setting is a puppy-loving town with other dog owners.

Content includes 12 popular dog breeds. The game supports augmented reality and StreetPass to create an immersive experience.

Details: Ubisoft, www.ubisoft.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: a pet simulator. Entry date: 8/26/2011.

Puterbugs

Puterbugs is a syndicated television show that features Mr. Scott, a teacher who asks children to become a computer detective, where they solve mysteries in such locales like Laptop Lagoon and Email Trail. Each case helps the child learn computer skills. Each episode is between 30 to 45 minutes. Produced by Imagine Tomorrow for Discovery Communications.

Details: Discovery Kids, www.discoverykids.com. Price: \$5/month. Ages: 3-8. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: computer skills. Entry date: 8/24/2011.





Quarrel

Mix together Scrabble and Risk and what do you get? Quarrel -- a fun, challenging spelling game for iPad and Xbox Live Arcade (as a download). This game would be excellent for either classroom use or for a fun after dinner game, as a good way to flex spelling and logic skills at the same time.

Designed for two players, the idea is to capture as much territory as possible using small squads of cavemen, ninjas, pirates and so on. Instead of guns, you use high-scoring words. A word can only have as many letters as the number of troops the player has in his army (i.e. if the player has five aliens, the word can only be five letters long).

The best speller will win the most battles, achieve domination of the entire map and win the game.

Details: Ignition Entertainment USA, www.ignitionusa.com. Price: \$5 and up. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad (\$5), iPhone, Xbox 360. Teaches/Purpose: spelling, language, anagrams, logic, reading. Entry date: 8/12/2011.

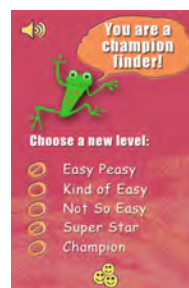


Scavenger Traveler

Can you find a black rock? How about a plastic fork? Scavenger Traveler is a checklist game for one or more children to play alone or with other members of the family.

The game features five sets of ten items, ranging from Easy Peasy ("anything soft"); Kind of Easy (items include a bug, paper and black rock); Not So Easy; Super Star; and Champion (a plastic fork, tin can, pine cone). The idea is that you find the items and touch the items which fills in the checklist. It would be nice if you could enter your own items, say, to plan for a trip, and record your label as well. We liked how it is possible to touch each word to hear it read aloud.

Details: Organa Kids, <http://organakids.com>. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, classification. Entry date: 7/8/2011.



Sly Cooper Thieves in Time

This is the first Sly Cooper game for the PS3 that features Sly Cooper and his cohorts, Bentley and Murray in a time-traveling adventure.

The game continues where Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves ended, with Sly having an alleged case of amnesia and Bentley as the keeper of the treasured Thievius Raccoonus. When Bentley discovers that pages of the book have begun to disappear in front of his eyes, he must round up the gang and save the Cooper Clan legacy from being destroyed forever.

Game features include: time travel, interactive puzzle elements, boss battles, re-designed characters, new stealth and combat moves and playable characters including Sly Cooper, Murray, Bentley. As you play, you can unlock costumes and special abilities. The game will also be playable in full Stereoscopic 3D. Developed by Sanzaru Games, Inc. and scheduled for release 2012.

Details: Sony Computer Entertainment America, www.scea.com. Price: \$60. Ages: 8-up. Platform: PlayStation 3. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 6/9/2011.



Spy Net Bionic Ear

Consisting of one ear bud, a battery pack (holding three AAA batteries) and a sensitive suction cup microphone) the Spy Net Bionic Ear lets you hear through doors or windows. It really works. Sadly, there's no auto-off feature, so when your child forgets to switch it off, the batteries die.

Details: Jakks Pacific, Inc., www.jakkspace.com. Price: \$20. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: A sensitive microphone. Entry date: 8/29/2011.





T Smart Learning Device

Like a tablet-based GPS for school-based learning, the T Smart Learning Device is described as an "interactive learning platform that provides learning motivation and management functions for students K-12". The T Smart Learning Device is designed to let students manage goals, study schedules, study groups, tutors and grades.

Promised features include the ability to involve parents in the monitoring process. The software was modeled after business applications. Coming this fall.

Details: SK Telecom Co. Ltd., www.sk.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 5-up. Platform: tablet-based education platform. Teaches/Purpose: . Entry date: 6/15/2011.

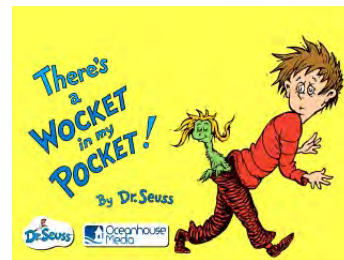


There's a Wocket in My Pocket

Visit a young boy's house which he shares with many unusual creatures. The rhyming story describes imaginary creatures in his house, such as zlocks behind the clocks and zowers in the shower.

Features of the book include professional narration, background audio, and individual words are highlighted as the story is read and words zoom up when pictures are touched. There are three ways to read the book: Auto Play, which plays like a movie by automatically reading and turning pages; Read To Me, which allows children to listen to the narrated story with words highlighted as they are read; and Read It Myself, which lets children read the book in its traditional format.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPhone, iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language. Entry date: 8/29/2011.



TI-Nspire CX Handheld

Remember the calculator? Believe it or not, even in the age of smart phones and tablets, most math and science classes still require that all students have a specific model, easily costing \$100 or more. Unlike smart phones, they don't have Internet connectivity (hence the ability to text message).

Moore's Law has not spared the calculator, however. Case in point: the \$165 Texas Instruments TI-Nspire CX Handheld, with a color, backlit display (320 x 240 pixels), 164 MB of memory and a rechargeable battery.

The 3D graphing feature makes it possible to graph, rotate and manipulate 3D functions. For the first time, you can import images (jpeg, jpg, bmp, png file formats) and overlay graphical elements for real-world activities.

You can also see multiple representations of a single problem, i.e. algebraic, geometric, numeric and text, side-by-side on the screen. Other features include built-in geometry capabilities, computer like features such as drop-down menus, and the ability to create, edit, and save work in documents similar to the word processing and file storage features of a computer. But wait, there's more. The included TI-Nspire Student Software makes it possible to plug the calculator into a Mac or Windows computer to integrate the data into lab reports.

So why not just download a calculator app? Here's why: the TI-Nspire CSX is approved for use on standardized tests including SAT, PSA/NMSQT, ACT, AP, IB, and Praxis exams. And it won't ring during a lecture.

Details: Texas Instruments, www.ti.com. Price: \$165. Ages: 14-up. Platform: color graphing calculator. Teaches/Purpose: a scientific calculator. Entry date: 5/26/2011.





ZooZoo Readables

Eight animal stories feature ZooZoo animal characters who tell short stories using simple sentences.

Each story is designed to be “readable” and accessible to a varying range of early reading levels, and feature animations that allow children to interact with the eight characters - lions, tigers, elephants, giraffes, hippos, zebras, frogs, and orangutans.

Zoozoo Readables is based on the school-based reading series - Zoozoo Into The Wild - originally published for early childhood classrooms throughout North America.

Each book features two ways to read: Read to Me - listen to the narrated story with words highlighted as they are read; and Read it Myself - read the book in its traditional form. Other features include the ability to replay animation by touching key characters, and both highlighting and narration can be turned on and off.

Details: Cavallo Media, www.cavallomedia.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, vocabulary. Entry date: 8/25/2011.



The lion roars.