

Children's TECHNOLOGY Review™

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iPad Killer?

\$250 or so can get you a lot of tablets these days, including the Nabi (p. 11), Playbase (p. 13) and One Laptop Per Child's XO-3 (p. 17). Can they catch the iPad?

Children's Technology Review

January 2012

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** Donotes an "Editor's
Choice" product, earning
a 4.3 or higher rating.*

On Tap for 2012: Another Exciting Year

Here are some specific predictions, some already starting to come true, for 2012:

- **More iOS apps.** Apple's continued dominance of the children's interactive space will carry into 2012, although Android will gain ground. But comparing an iPad with an Android tablet is like comparing Ben and Jerry's with ice milk. See the reviews of both the Nabi (p. 11) and the Playbase (p. 13) in this issue.
- **More innovation—and increased quality.** Good hardware makes good software; and the tablet platform will begin to bear fruit in amazing ways. Consider X-Rays on page 14.
- **More tablets with strange names.** An increase in quality \$200 to \$250 Android options, and the Amazon Fire begins to increase.
- **Increasingly sneaky ways to get your money.** In-app sales, ads, and click-to buy links will never go away. So help children develop their in-app sales literacy skills.
- **Two new platforms.** Both the Wii U and the Sony Vita will debut, further expanding digital play opportunities. The Vita has two capacitive touch screens, letting you "push up" the screen from the bottom, but it is unlikely we'll see too many children's titles on it. Wii U brings a completely new two screen experience.
- **Other goodies** will include cheaper solid state hard drives and large HD screens; more Kinect titles, and fewer spinning hard drives, as solid state components improve. We'll see a bump in innovation, as toy companies start to reinvest in R&D, smarter virtual worlds and more augmented reality. In short, this is going to be another exciting year.

As I put this issue to bed, I'm off to a very non-DAP (developmentally appropriate place) for a child—Las Vegas, Nevada, for the annual Kids @ Play conference and KAPi awards. If you're in the vicinity of the Las Vegas Fashion Mall at 6:30 Thursday evening, please come join us for the awards ceremony, where we'll recognize the best interactive design from 2011.

What's Inside an iPad?

iPads are amazing devices, but unlike a computer you can't see what's inside. In this month's LittleClickers we visit links and videos that show you how iPads work.

Lasers, Search Lights and Game Design

While we were celebrating the holidays, Scott Traylor was putting together a long lost interview with Will Wright on page 5. After a lot of sanding and a refreshing (including a new post-script) we think we've uncovered some gems. In addition, Scott captured the first in a series of three Howard Gardner lectures. Have a look <http://youtu.be/GincrNxzTwo>.

Thoughts from a Kindergarten Teacher

Chris Crowell reminds us that failure is part of the learning process; which is an excellent thing to keep in mind as we charge into a new year full of games, apps and tablets. It is from the Irish writer Samuel Beckett: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better." See page 4.

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What's Inside an iPad?

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

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Have you ever wondered what it looks like inside an iPad 2? How thick and strong is the glass? Where is the CPU? How big are the batteries? Taking your mom's iPad apart is NOT a good idea, but you can still see what they look like inside, thanks to these sites and videos.

1. Where is an iPad made?

In China in a huge factory called Foxconn. Thousands of workers and robots work (and live) in a city-sized facility, where they make all sorts of computers -- not just iPads. Want to see what it looks like? We found some photos <http://bit.ly/q8c4FV>

2. How do you take an iPad apart?

You can't. Apple seals the parts with glue. At <http://www.ifixit.com/Browse/iPad> however, you can find step-by-step instructions on how to open an iPad, using such things as a hair dryer, guitar picks, and special prying tools. If you try such a thing, remember that the iPad is full of dangerous parts and it is very unlikely you'll get it back together again. It is much easier to look at the photos.



3. Which is faster?

- a) A Color Nook
- b) An Amazon Fire
- c) An iPad 2

At Geek.com <http://bit.ly/trsFnr> these three tablets are compared. You'll learn that each has a processor that is the same speed (1 GHz). The

Nook and Fire are smaller, lighter and more portable; the iPad is thinner and has the best battery life.

4. What's the most expensive part in an iPad?

At iSupli.com, <http://bit.ly/eorsWY> you'll learn that it costs Apple \$336 to make an iPad 2. Of that, \$127 goes for the touch screen (with special aluminosilicate glass) and \$26 is for the 10 hour batteries.

5. How strong is the glass?

Watch this video, and you'll learn that the iPad 2 glass can bend <http://youtu.be/r4vvQq7BpiE>.



APPLICATION

The parts of computers generally fall into three categories: **input**, **storage**, and **output**. Find any unused laptop, get some tools, and take it apart. Stack the parts into three piles. Are there any that don't belong?



LittleClickers YouTube Playlist: Inside an iPad

<http://www.youtube.com/user/childrenstech#grid/user/EDE4C5D4AE2A6C4F>

 Foxconn To Build New China Plant TantaNews 861 views	 A typical work day for a Foxconn worker in NMA NewsDirect NMA NewsDirect 14,327 views	 Nexus One: The Story - Episode 4 GoogleNexusOne 246,012 views	 iPhone 4 manufacturing movie arcmatica 73,621 views	 Apple - iPad 2 - TV Ad - We Believe Apple 1,880,814 views	 iPad Disassembly by TechRestore TechRestore 644,565 views	 iPad 1 vs iPad 2 strength test by iFixYourI iFixYourI 793,401 views
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Chris Crowell

We're Always Learning

Learning takes place everywhere, all the time. It knows no snow days, holidays or personal circumstance. There is no pause button. When a student says they are bored, it simply tells me that they're not appreciating a moment when they could be learning. As educators, this is an important time to be open to our own learning. The explosion of wireless, tablet-based technologies has led our schools to a new tipping point that is forcing us to learn, and sometimes fail. We're moving from a fixed, paper-based curriculum, to an adaptive digital swimming pool of interesting content. This is great, because it works with our natural learning instincts. In the scenario I imagine, both teachers and students will be freed from a scripted, rigid curriculum, and the ideals of the open classroom movement -- championed by many in the 1970s -- can start to happen. This tablet/Google/digital camera revolution couldn't happen at a better time.

During the past year in New Jersey, educators have been under attack. We're paid too much, and we fail too often, and some of us should be replaced by distance learning. Perhaps, but I think teachers like me, and traditional schools with brick-and-mortar classrooms, are needed more than ever. When used with technology, they can provide a social, academic, and emotional garden, where humanity can grow roots. The 21st century school is where people learn to relate to others who don't share our opinions... where future lawyers negotiate settlements over playground equipment. Formal schooling gives challenges, and lets children fail, in a safe, environment.



Chris Crowell has been a Kindergarten teacher for 17 years at Desmares Elementary School in Flemington NJ. He reviews apps for CTR and has been experimenting with multi-touch learning.

*"Ever tried. Ever failed.
No matter. Try Again.
Fail again. Fail better"*
by Samuel Beckett.

Yes fail. Failure is a vital part of learning. How many block towers or sand castles have you made that are still standing today? So we need a curriculum that supports this important way to learn. At this year's Dust or Magic Institute, the first panel consisted of a case study of learning from failure. We heard how programs like The Living Books, KidPix and The Oregon Trail became household names, but only after a struggle. At one point the woman sitting next to me leaned over to ask if I could recall the "classic" quote about failure. I noted the irony as she furiously scribbled -- and failed -- onto a notepad as she tried in vain to remember the quote.

As a kindergarten teacher in the dawn of a new age in learning, I get to experience the unique joy of watching a young child struggle and learn with all sorts of materials, including iPads, at the very beginning of their lifelong educational journey. The recent changes in technology have put us all -- children and adults -- in the same boat. Like the woman at the conference trying to recall that quote, we can share the struggle, and celebrate the ah-ha moments when the pieces come together. Suddenly, after a page of failed attempts and a good deal of ink, she got it. With a huge grin, she passed me the page. It was **"Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better"** by Samuel Beckett.

Join a small group of smart people to explore children's interactive design for multi-touch tablets.

When? May 20-22, 2012, Sunday to Tuesday

Where? Asilomar Conference Grounds on the Monterey Peninsula, CA



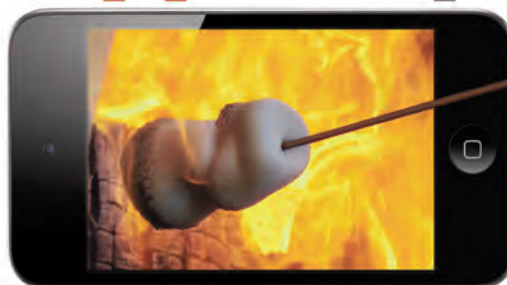
The Sunday feature presentation will be by Theo Gray of Touch Press

Who? Designers, reviewers and researchers in the children's app space, including **Lorraine Akemann** of Moms With Apps; **Daren Carstens** of Carstens Studios; **Barbara Chamberlin**, Director of the University of New Mexico Learning Lab; **Ingrid Moon**, Disney; **Carolyn Hu Flexor**, Duck Duck Moose; **Theodore Gray** of Touch Press and others.

Cost & Registration: \$1290, (\$990 each for 2 or more), not counting Asilomar housing (~\$136/night) or optional UPENN Graduate Credit (\$100).

Don't Miss the Third Annual

**Dust or Magic 2012
AppCamp**



www.dustormagic.com



Will Wright on Game Design, Play and Learning

by Scott Traylor

If somebody asked you to name the masters of interactive design, chances are good that Will Wright would be on your list. He created SimCity which led to SimAnt, The Sims, and Spore, and he's currently working on a new social game called HiveMind. Last year in New York, I heard him speak and was struck by his thoughts about the learning opportunities he brings to his players, and asked him about it. What does he think about when he makes a game? What are some key influences? (Note that this was a long interview, and edits have been made for clarity).

Scott Traylor: In your presentations you often refer to learning theory, including your own Montessori education. It seems you have a passion for the topic.

Will Wright: Learning theory is certainly one of the factors that shapes my talks and my work in general, but it's only one element. For me, making a game or a talk is a process of continual self-discovery.

Scott: Can this be attributed to your Montessori background?

Will: The Montessori stuff is good for self-discovery and exploration, but Montessori didn't invent it. Self-discovery and exploration have existed for millennia before Montessori. It's the way the human brain works. The whole constructivist approach to education simply leverages hardware that's already built in.

Scott: When you say "constructivist" is it fair to say that you are thinking of Piaget and perhaps Seymour Papert?

Will: Oh, yes, and Alan Kay as well. This formalized approach to learning has really only been around for maybe a 100 years. We can go back hundreds and hundreds of years before that and see people understood this as the primary mode of learning. Consider the Renaissance and Leonardo Da Vinci. At some point the pedagogy got wrapped around that inherent process. It's something that has remained, almost becoming more relevant in terms of its implications with modern technology, or our imaginations, and our creativity. It's almost more relevant now where people can approach a wider range of endeavors creatively, because of the tools we have, for gathering information, for creating things, for sharing things.

Scott: So you're saying we're at a point, technically speaking, where we are empowered as creators, as explorers, in anything that might interest us?

Will: Yes, especially in things like the social dimension. I can create something and put it up on the web and then by tomorrow 1,000 people might've seen it. Think back 100 years ago what it would have taken for that to happen. It just wasn't a possibility then, but now it's a possibility for anyone.

Scott: While these theories have become more formalized in the last century or so, good teachers and good facilitators of learning have been aware of these things for ages. Now there's the opportunity for learning to be amped up through technology and through participation in a way we have never experienced before, in such an immediate way.

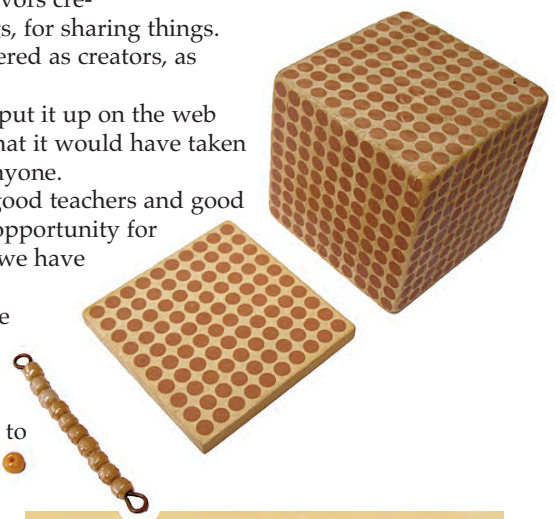
Will: Yeah, Seymour Papert and Alan Kay were among the first people to realize the impact that modern technology was going to have. Nicholas Negroponte, as well.

Scott: When you talk about games, or video games, you often refer to these things as playful objects. Is that intentional?

Will: Let's take a look at that. People like to call the things I make games, but I tend to think of them as toys. There really needs to be more open-ended play experiences and that's a broader world than the formal definition of games. I think a game is really a subset of the world of play. In substance it's really just semantics but it's cultural as well. A lot of people think of games, video games, as this brand new thing that's popped up. But of course games have been around forever. Most games are based on some fundamental play experience that at some point becomes formalized. There are different connotations to play, and with that formal rules. You might play with others, or by yourself, the play might be a zero sum game, or not. These are just a few specialized versions of play in my mind.

The typical Montessori learning experience is based on time with tangible manipulatives, such as these base 10 beads. There's 1 bead, 10 beads, 100 beads, and 1,000 beads, in the form of a block. These physical manipulatives help young learners understand small and large, base-10 counting, and maybe even geometry (point, line, plane, volume). Substitute beads with the elements of a city, where you can freely experiment with a different kind of units and rules. Get the idea? (Illustration above from Scott Traylor, below from Sim City 2000, from the March/April 1994 issue of Children's Software Review).

"As a Sims player, day to day, hour to hour, minute to minute, they make resource management decisions that would impact their Sim in the short term and long term. Then there's the paradigm shift. What if your real life was a game? ... How would you play it? This is one of those things you're not going to measure on any standardized test."





Scott: Are there any play experts you follow?

Will: Not really. There have been a lot of attempts in the game design community to come up with more formal structures of frameworks to understand this. I think we're just beginning to scratch the surface. They're looking at the different perspec-

tives on play coming from cognitive science or sociology or evolutionary psychology. I don't think any one of these things is going to capture the subject completely. You have to triangulate from all these different perspectives.

Scott: Do you think the vocabulary around play and around games is evolving?

Will: In general, yes. A game is like the nucleus of the experience, but it's not the whole experience. I spend a lot of time thinking about the meta-game, the experiences we're having around the game, experiences that are the larger iceberg. For example, The Sims is a game on some level, where you can play with goal structures and rules. However, there's a larger game where people make things and tell stories about the game. Then they try things with online communities. These are the things that people do outside the game. It is what I call the meta-game. To me, the more successful games are the ones that spark these larger meta-games.

Scott: You mean bringing the play or the game experience outside of the game, in some kind of social context, where people can talk about and interact around the game?

Will: Yes, in some sense the game in the player's minds goes from being a specific entertainment experience to becoming a tool for self-expression. At first they were playing for the fun, just exploring. Then they start realizing they can be expressive with it. It's almost like playing a musical instrument. At first, you experiment and press buttons. At some point you realize you can compose music. You might even start to perform. Eventually this toy becomes a tool to express one's self.

Scott: Is it accurate to say that the opportunity for creative expression is also a central part of your games?

Will: It's one of the more powerful benefits of technology. We can do things now that allow people to come in and craft more interesting experiences and share them with others. Somebody can take something from their imagination, create an external artifact, and then share it. They can even collaborate on larger imaginary structures. This is something that used to be confined to a small number of people that had very high skills in language. These individuals could write a book and describe some imaginary world, like Alice in Wonderland. But not many people had that skill set. Now average people are getting these tools that empower them, to



Can you survive on an alien planet? After you design your own creature, you move around meeting other creatures and deciding if you should fight, talk, or collaborate. The right decisions can earn you wings for flying, or better eyes for seeing. Spore Hero, from CTR, Oct 2009.

create entire worlds, external to their imagination, to share with other people.

Scott: You have this amazing ability to translate complicated systems into successful play objects. What is your thought process?

Will: First, how much are these things representations of the real world? When I get started it's usually with something that contains some aspect of the real world that fascinates me. I'll start to imagine if I had a toy planet, what kind of things would I want to do with it? What kind of processes would I like to see? By connecting the toy to real world, it maintains a relevance. Later that toy becomes the scaffolding for building a more elaborate model. When people get to the point where they realize the toy's limitations, they start discussing and debating what their more elaborate model is relative to that toy. When players first started playing SimCity they didn't know what was going on. They started building things, they started exploring what caused land value to go up or down, they explored issues around crime, or pollution. Eventually they get to a point where they say, "I don't think that's the way traffic really works" or "I don't think the land value model is very accurate because of this or that." They could not have formalized these thoughts without the toy. When a player realizes the limitations of a toy, the user has created a better model for themselves internally that transcends the toy.

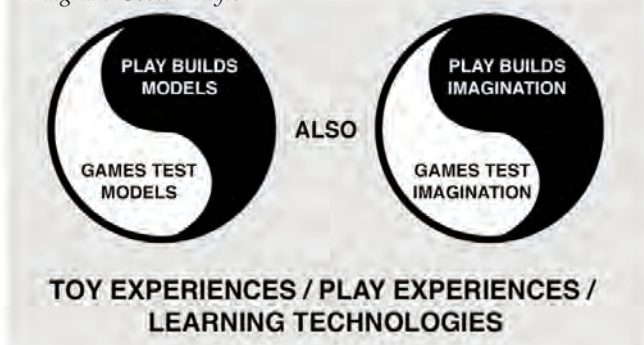
Scott: Once a certain level of mastery is achieved with a game, that's the point when a player will go out and look for additional information to improve upon those models, those systems that they have in their mind?

Will: Yes, that's the real model we're building, actually. The computer is really just a compiler for that model.

Scott: What you have described in a sense are games that are digital manipulatives. Tangible manipulatives are a big part of the Montessori world and early learning. Sometimes I hear educators debate the benefit of digital manipulatives over tangible ones. Even if a digital manipulative doesn't perfectly represent a system, they lead a user in a direction that helps facilitate further learning and growth and discovery that is more accurate and representational of the actual model.

Will: Think about it. That's what we call the scientific method. Quantum mechanics does not describe, is not reality, but it's our best model so far for describing what we observe to be reality. It's not the first model we built to describe it and it's

Diagram: Scott Traylor



not the last model we're going to build either. Each model is making a more accurate understanding of reality. They're all just models and none of them are accurate representations of actual reality.

Scott: Does the knowledge a user gains through game play transfer into the real world. Do you have an example of people playing games where the user transferred something they learned from a game into the real world?

Will: There are a lot of things that people learn from games that can't be measured on any test. On the surface games don't necessarily feel like education. But when you look deeper into them they really represent a fundamentally deeper level of education. There's a common story I hear from players of *The Sims*. Someone will be playing the game and they really get into it. They make sure to take care of the basic needs of their Sims, getting them fed and rested before they go to work the next day. These players can get totally obsessed over making their virtual lives perfect. In doing so, a Sim might get a promotion at work the next day. At some point many players experience an "a-ha" moment -- that it's 2:00 in the morning, and they have to go to work the next day. Then somehow the players understand that they were taking better care of their Sim than they were of themselves. They were making sure their Sim got to bed on time, was well rested for work the next day, while the players were staying up late playing this silly computer game. For these players this is where they started understanding the strategy within the Sims as a time management game. It's a game where you juggle many factors. Sometimes a player will step back for the first time and see their real life as a strategy game. As a player, day to day, hour to hour, minute to minute, they were making resource management decisions that would impact their Sim in the short term and long term. Then there's the paradigm shift: What if your real life was a game, and you actually had these resources, and had to develop structures, how would you play it? This is one of those things you're not going to measure on any standardized test. Through playing, the player would walk away from the game thinking deeply about every aspect in their life. "Do I really need to do this now?" or "Should I really spend that money?" For the first time, the game caused them to clearly see the decisions they were making in every day life.

Scott: If the game is the model of a system, which happens to loosely or exactly parallel your own life, at some point, you might reach that a-ha moment.

Will: Right. People who think of themselves as really good strategy players, for some reason never think of their real life as a strategy game. If I were to treat my life as a strategy game how would I play it?

Scott: Will, thanks very much for sharing your thoughts on play, learning, and games. While we have talked about a variety of inspirations and influences across a number of professions, is there one person that has done more to shape your thinking than any other?

Will: My mother, Beverly Edwards. She supported me with all my crazy ideas as a child. If there was something I was interested in trying or doing, she believed that I knew what I was doing, even if at the time certain ideas seemed slightly odd. Just her believing in me allowed me to keep on trying new things, made me believe in myself, made me confident that I could do something big, something special. I thank my mother, for everything I have, everything I achieved, for her wonderful spirit and the great support she gave during my childhood years and in the years thereafter. I credit all my success in life to her unconditional belief in me and support in my trying something new.



Linkography

NY Times - The Long Zoom, Oct. 8, 2006, by Steven Johnson
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/08/magazine/08games.html?scp=2&sq=Spore,%20Will%20Wright&st=cse>

TED Talk - Will Wright Makes Toys That Make Worlds, Mar 2007.
http://www.ted.com/talks/will_wright_makes_toys_that_make_worlds.html

NY Times - SimCity Living, Nov. 21, 2008

Maria Montessori: The 138-Year-Old Inspiration Behind Spore
 March 29, 2009 <http://kotaku.com/5164248/maria-montessori-the-138-year-old-inspiration-behind-spore>

Jeff Braun, Maxis Co-Founder Presentation at Dust or Magic Design Institute, Nov 1, 2009 at both
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3g1OZlj0dSQ>
 and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceNrxbpnrQ> (the second with 5 extra minutes).

The Man Behind Spore Explores Gaming as Learning, Feb 5, 2011,
<http://doteath.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/02/05/the-man-behind-spore-explores-gaming-as-learning/?scp=1&sq=Spore,%20Will%20Wright&st=cse>

Huffington Post - HiveMind Creator Will Wright Hopes To Turn Real-Life Into A Game January 2, 2012
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/02/hivemind-the-sims-will-wright_n_1179594.html

Scott Traylor scott@360kid.com 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. Besides attending a Montessori classroom himself, Scott's spouse teaches in a Montessori classroom.



There's even a 3D version of the Sims, released last year, on the Nintendo 3DS



Feature Reviews

JANUARY 2012

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

Another Monster at the End of This Book, The

If you liked the first *Monster at the End of This Book*, you'll say "yippee!" another 12 pages!

Each page documents Grover's creative attempts to keep Elmo (and your child) from turning the page and getting to the end. He tries glue (you can rub it off), locks (you match colors to solve the combination) and so on. Some words are highlighted, making this a good general early reading experience, and potential bedtime favorite. See also *The Monster at the End of This Book*.

Created by Callaway Digital Arts for Sesame Workshop.

Details: Callaway Digital Arts, www.callaway.com. Price: \$.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, some matching, logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 12/18/2011. [WB]

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



Bizzy Bear on the Farm

Here's another excellent Nosy Crow app, this time an adaptation of the children's book by Benji Davies that has just been released in the U.S. by Candlewick Press.

In the nine-screen presentation, children help Bizzy Bear on the farm, picking apples (dragging and dropping from the tree to a basket), gathering eggs, feeding the pigs and rounding up the lambs into their pen.

As in "The Three Little Pigs", the narration by children is professionally done, and the activities work well to support the story. In a unique twist, parent options let you determine the amount of time the text appears (short, medium and long).

Details: Nosy Crow, www.nosycrow.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 2-4. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, cause and effect. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 12/18/2011. [WB]

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



Bob Books: Reading Magic 1

Perfect for a child learning that letters are related to sounds and word combinations, the Bob Books app is based on the print editions of a popular workbook series (learn more at www.bobbooks.com).

The app presents a step-by-step word-building experience, where the more letters you match, the more the picture fills in. It's like building comprehension, one letter at a time, with instant feedback.

Reading Magic 1 contains twelve scenes for 32 words, presented in four levels provide increasing challenges to children as they play, slowly introducing new letter sounds and repetition of earlier ones so as to build mastery and confidence. Also available is Reading Magic 2, with 12 new scenes, different animations and 50 words. If you are a reading teacher, get this app.

Details: Learning Touch, www.learningtouch.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, phonics, letter recognition. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 11/28/2011. [WB]

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





Charlie Brown Christmas, A

See also "My Charlie Brown Christmas Tree," a free add on designed to give you a taste of this app; that lets you decorate your own tree.

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/my-charlie-brown-christmas/id484320301?mt=8>

Loud Crow Interactive and Peanuts Worldwide have partnered to produced a series of digital interactive books based on the cartoon specials. The first in the series, A Charlie Brown Christmas, features narration by Peter Robbins, the original voice of Charlie Brown, along with original scenes and dialog from the 1965 animated classic, and digitally remastered illustrations, animation, and music optimized for your smartphone or tablet. You can play Schroeder's piano, finger paint, go caroling with the Peanuts choir, and participate in the Spectacular Super-Colossal Neighborhood Christmas Lights and Display Contest to unlock decorations for your own Charlie Brown Christmas Tree. Other features include: word and note highlighting designed to help improve reading and musical skills; hear individual words spoken when tapped; and touch and drag object to make them come to life or tilt to watch them slide and move.

Details: Loud Crow Interactive Inc., www.loudcrow.com. Price: \$6.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android 108 MB. Teaches/Purpose: reading, music. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 11/17/2011. [WB]

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



Dr. Seuss Band

Transform your iPad into a zany Dr. Seuss horn, with eight buttons, arranged as a whole-tone. You can either freely improvise by touching the keys, or you can use the one octave keyboard on the bottom of the screen to earn points by matching songs from the song book. This unlocks new instruments, effects and songs. Content includes 10 songs, including the soundtrack from The Cat in the Hat, Green Eggs and Ham, Dr. Seuss's ABC, Hop on Pop and more.

There are five horn-style instruments with different voices, and fun effects, including an echo-chamber fish bowl. The GameCenter feature lets you match scores with others. All in all, this is an excellent app.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: music, timing, coordination. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.9 stars. Entry date: 12/13/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	98%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	



HappiTaps

Slip your iPhone or iPod Touch inside this plush holder, and download a free, well designed app called Beary Happy.

The result? You can turn your iPod Touch or iPhone into a teddy bear. There are ten modes hidden behind the parent options: HappiTaps, Toddler, Nighty Night, Story Time, Sing Along, Peek-a-Boo!, Feeding Time, Rattle & Fun, Sleep and Expressions. Each comes with one activity or song; additional stories or songs can be added as in-app purchase. Purchased content is well marked (the price is given in advance).

Details: Infantino, www.infantino.com. Price: \$19.99. Ages: 0-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: an iPhone or iPod Touch peripheral. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 11/22/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	80%
Educational	3	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	9	





Hexbug Larva

Slightly larger than a fortune cookie, this robotic creature can "slither" on smooth surfaces, propelled by special offset wheels that give it a unique motion that is best described as "creepy." It is the sixth of seven Hexbugs, and it is one of our favorites. A nose-mounted sensor can detect such things as a leg of a chair, and change directions, accordingly. It is available in five colors, and uses three LR44 button cell batteries.

How does it work? This legless creature utilizes a two-sided push motion that thrusts forward first with one side of its body, then with the other side of its body, creating a "slinky" like effect. This slithering, crawling sensation, when combined with its free-floating tail and shiny finish, produces an eerily realistic body movement and overall effect.

See the video at <http://www.youtube.com/childrenstech>.

Details: Innovation First, Inc., www.hexbug.com. Price: \$10.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: Not much, smart toy. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 11/17/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	10	88%
Educational	7	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	10	



Kirby's Return to Dream Land

Back in 2002, Kirby: Nightmare in Dream Land was one of the best titles for Nintendo's Game Boy Advance system. Now it's one of the best for the Wii.

In the story, an alien spaceship crashes in the otherwise peaceful realm of Planet Pop Star, and its pieces are scattered throughout the land. You must guide Kirby to find the ship's parts and help an alien return to its home planet. But, this time, Kirby is not alone. At any time during the game, up to three more players can join in and play as Meta Knight, King Dedede, Waddle Dee or a different color Kirby.

The game features Kirby's Copy Ability, which allows him to inhale, spit and transform as he encounters enemies. Other features include classic and 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. Also, in the game are new Super Abilities, which are activated when Kirby inhales special enemy characters. For example, the "Ultra Sword" Super Ability allows Kirby to swing a giant sword and wipe out an entire screen's worth of enemies.

There are a lot of creative twists and the orchestrated sound track help to insure that that Kirby will remain a classic for another generation.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Wii. Teaches/Purpose: logic, problem solving, spatial relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 8/26/2011. [WB]

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



ESRB Rating: Everyone, Mild Cartoon Violence



Magic Guitar

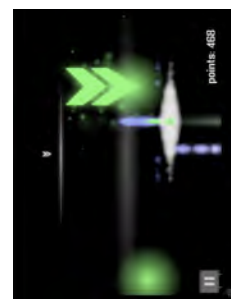
Turn your slippery iPhone screen into a guitar fretboard with this Magic Guitar app. Hard to master and potentially addicting, this follow-along style app lets you mimic various guitar styles.

You hold your phone like a guitar neck, and beams of light tell your finger where to go. A shake will bend the tone, and a swipe will give texture. The idea is to match the moving marks as closely as possible to earn points, which are recorded on a leaderboard.

A login-free sharing feature lets you listen and play along with others, from around the world. The app is free with a base set of about ten songs. Additional songs can be unlocked and purchased as in-app sales. Some of the songs are very real sounding, from The Rolling Stones, KISS and others. Be careful, though, one in-app option costs \$99.99.

Details: Smule, Inc., www.smule.com. Price: \$free, \$2.99 and up. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: music, guitar. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 12/16/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	92%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	





Nabi

Designed for kids yet powerful enough to be highly desired by a big brother, sister or parent, this 7 inch Android powered tablet isn't kidding around when it comes to such things as the ability to play Netflix movies, or apps like Cut the Rope. Comparing it to the iPad, however, is like comparing ice milk to Ben & Jerry's ice cream, however, although of all the non-Apple tablets for children we've tested so far (Playbase, Vinci, InnoTab and LeapPad) Nabi rated the best.

Nabi comes with a Kid Mode that gives parents what they've been asking for on an iPad -- a parent-controlled, password-protected interface that locks a child inside a gated digital community. This means you can pick the apps, videos and sites you want your child to see, and because the app runs Flash, this can include sites like PBS kids. Downsides include a smaller screen size than the iPad, slower rather clunky scrolling, and many more crashes.

If you want to use the tablet to watch a movie or check your own email, you start "Mommy Mode" by entering your password. At this point Nabi is no different than any other Android tablet.

An essential part of the business model is the Nabi App Store, home to 500 pre-selected apps, games and other content, and there's a direct pipeline to the Toysrus.com app. Fifteen apps come pre-installed, plus some ebooks and movie trailers which helps to make the out-of-the-box experience nicer. The speaker-sound is acceptable although the stereo headphone jacks definitely supplement the audio. Also noteworthy -- the mini-HDMI port, so you can plug the tablet into your HD screen.

Nabi's tech specs are impressive with a 1.1GHz Cortex-A9 CPU, 7-inch multi-touch screen, although the batteries on our test unit kept draining. In addition, the recessed power button is hard to find, and easy to bump when trying to adjust the volume. We were less impressed with the "University" -- a collection of dry multiple-choice questions for Pre-K through 5th grade.

There is 4GB of onboard storage and MicroSD card input and support for Flash 10. Visit <http://www.nabipad.com>. Additional game content can be loaded by way of a MicroSD card slot.

The bottom line? For \$200, Nabi is certainly "not bad" and "worth a second look." Apple's iPad, however, has nothing to worry about. See also Playbase, LeapPad and Innotab.

Details: Fuhu, Inc., www.foozkids.com. Price: \$200. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Android. Teaches/Purpose: A tablet for kids. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 9/26/2011. [WB]

Nickelodeon Dance

A great music library meets poor interactive design, in this two-player movement program for Kinect and Wii (we tried the Kinect version, to which the ratings apply).

Content includes 30 songs that feature Dora, Diego, and the Backyardigans as models. It is easy for a second player to jump into the dance, say for a mom or dad to dance along.

While Dora fans will like the characters and authentic narration, they'll tire of the excessive instructions and confusing scoring system. Younger children will need help figuring the multi-stage setup. This one needs improvement. Created by High Voltage Software, published by 2K Play for Nickelodeon Kids & Family.

Details: 2K Play, www.2kgames.com/2kplay/. Price: \$40. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Xbox Kinect, Wii. Teaches/Purpose: dancing, gross motor coordination. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 1.5 stars. Entry date: 6/29/2011. [WB]

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



Ease of Use	2	30%
Educational	5	
Entertaining	4	
Design Features	2	
Good Value	2	

ESRB Rating: Everyone





Painting With Time

Helping a child understand long term temporal relationships -- things like how a plant grows or how a glacier retreats -- has always been a challenge for a parent, librarian or teacher. Now there's an app for that, and it works.

Featuring a very basic design, Painting With Time (called "Paint With Time" in the app store) exemplifies how you can leverage the power of a multi-touch screen to make an abstract concept -- in this case time -- have meaning. :

A gallery containing 14 pictures includes such things as A Messy Room (showing how a child's playroom gets messy over just a few days), Growing a Beard (over 30 days), "Spring Comes to Boston" and "A Glacier Retreats."

You start by seeing a picture. Using options on the side of the screen, you can quickly jump between different units of time. In the case of a beard, the options are 10 day intervals. A slice option lets you divide the scene into different views, so you can mix and match the times.

This app is part of a larger long term NSF initiative designed to expand the general public's notion of time relationships. It was created by Red Hill Studios, which has also produced a two-hour documentary called Exploring Time and a traveling museum exhibition called Playing with Time. Other timelapse movie content is at www.exploringtime.org. Perhaps the best part -- the app is free.

Details: Red Hill Studios, www.redhillstudios.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: science, time. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 12/31/2011. [WB]

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



Plants HD

A good idea that could be implemented with more polish, Plants HD lets you drag and drop the seven stages of a plant into the correct order: seeds-dispersal-germination-plants and trees-flowers-pollination-fruits.

The only problem with the first menu is that you don't know where to start and/or stop the sorting, so it is easy to get confused. In addition, the background music is a bit overbearing. It can be muted, however. More useful parts of the app include the ability to tap on a stage to learn facts about the process (all text is narrated, a nice feature) and a quiz that lets you earn points.

If you're an elementary teacher looking for an app to reinforce plant knowledge, this is a dry but valid option.

Details: Sprout Labs, www.sproutlabs.net. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: science plant life cycle - from seeds to fruit. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 1/2/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	78%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	5	
Good Value	9	





Playbase

Clunky but full of possibilities, this 7-inch Android tablet is designed to be of use to both kids and adults. It comes from Singapore-based Karuma, and is wrapped in a thin silicone cover for protection against drops that doubles as a flimsy kick-stand for watching movies. It is powered by a 1.2 Ghz processor with 8 GB of onboard RAM. A micro SD card provides an additional route for expansion.

Slightly thinner than the Nabi, this tablet has fewer ports (there is no HDMI out). Like Nabi, it is hard to find the on/off switch. When compared to the iPad or iPod Touch, both tablets suffer from screen lag and meager battery life. Finding the recessed power button is hard, and it is also easy to bump it accidentally when you're trying to adjust the volume. The tablet is both synced and charged through a flat micro USB port.

The operating system is at best clumsy, both for children and adults. According to Karuma, "there is no Bloatware...you decide which apps you want straight out of the box." Reading between the lines, it seems as if there is little or no attempt to make this tablet child (or adult) friendly at all. Apps can be downloaded from standard Android stores -- two come pre-installed -- Soc.io and Applibs, but we found it hard to find anything child appropriate other than a free version of a St. Patrick's Day-themed version of Angry Birds, in Chinese. Other apps, like the free Pac Man app would run, but only in a phone-sized screen orientation.

We were not able to find or test the children's interface, called PlayUI, that promises "simplified icons for easy navigation" and "direct access to media like video, books and music."

Like the Nabi, Vinci or Samsung Tab, this tablet offers all the promise of thousands of apps that can run on the Android operating system, but it makes little effort to help you match them to your child. There's certainly little threat to the iPad, at this point.

Details: Karuma Innovations, www.play-base.com. Price: \$270. Ages: 4-up. Platform: Android. Teaches/Purpose: An android tablet. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.8 stars. Entry date: 11/22/2011. [WB]

SpongeBob's Surf & Skate Roadtrip

Skating/surfing and SpongeBob come together in this potentially fun but rather tedious game for the Kinect (we did not test the DS version).

The SpongeBob humor is certainly noteworthy. However, there are many skiing, sledding and surfing games like this one for Kinect, and our testers found the format tiring after just a few runs. In the game, you must move down a hill (or a river) and steer to avoid obstacles. The steering is strange. A tutorial teaches you how to keep one foot in place and slide the other to direct your board. This is the first time we've seen this type of control mechanism. Why not just lean?

In the story, the friends have strayed from Bikini Bottom and landed on a beach. The game features a two player mode that lets you surf or skate side-by-side. The DS version contains a wireless multiplayer function that we did not test (ratings apply to the Xbox version), and a single player mode lets you set off on a road trip with SpongeBob and friends. Content includes 12 courses (six waterways and six seaside streets). The DS version contains 24 boarding maps and 10 unlockable snowboarding stages. Developed by Blitz for Xbox (\$50) and by Sabarasa for the Nintendo DS (\$30). The bottom line? This game could be fun, but the testers agreed that "the graphics and the narration are better than the controls."

Details: THQ, Inc., www.thq.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Xbox 360, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: Lower body coordination, kinesthetic movement. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.6 stars. Entry date: 11/15/2011. [WB]

Ease of Use	6	75%
Educational	N	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	7	

ESRB Rating:



Ease of Use	5	72%
Educational	7	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	7	

ESRB Rating: Everyone





Twister Mania

Fun, fast, and sure to work up a sweat, this movement game has very little to do with the traditional game of Twister.

After you log in using the innovative interface (you see yourself rendered inside the menu, and touch what you want), you choose which of up to eight players will play in the three game modes.

To play, you must shape your body to match the shapes you see on the screen. You might have to fit through a cutout, bend your arms to mirror a model, or clear the screen of stacked shapes by touching all the same colors, at once. The games include Shape Frenzy (mimic the shape that appears on the screen to earn points based on how well you fill its silhouette); Twist & Fit (avoid the wall and fit your silhouette through cutouts coming at you on a moving wall, scoring points by passing through a wall without touching); Break It Down (work your way through a stack of colored blocks by assuming their form. When a shape is removed, the wall above will begin to crumble); and Spot On (Challenge up to three players or four teams of two) in a game of contortion H-O-R-S-E. Create a shape and see if your friends can match it.

You can play solo to earn the fastest time, team up in co-op mode, or go head-to-head in any game mode with family and friends. The game features three main game modes. Party Play combines all game challenges. Play It All is a campaign mode that lets you try every game challenge from start to finish, and Quick Play lets you jump in and select any of the 16 ways to play and difficulty level for a quick challenge. All in all, this is one of the best party games we've seen. It is an excellent way to practice large body coordination skills. Created for Hasbro by Majesco Entertainment.

Details: Majesco Entertainment, www.majescoentertainment.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Xbox Kinect. Teaches/Purpose: movement, gross motor coordination, socialization. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 8/30/2011. [WB]

X is for X-Ray

What does the inside of a seashell look like? What about an insect, a motorcycle or an iPad? Here's an app that lets you find out. The app contrasts two images -- before x-ray and after x-ray, and every possible gradation between. To move between the views, you swipe with a single finger, from top to bottom. Like putting on an X-Ray glasses, you gradually start to be able to see through the image. You can also spin the objects, making it fun to look at and explore the items from every angle.

Content includes 26 everyday objects, arranged from A to Z. Navigation is easy; just touch an alphabet strip at the bottom of the screen. A double-tap offers a stereoscopic option, or you can pinch to zoom and reveal detail. This app is based on the photography of Hugh Turvey, the Artist in Residence at the British Institute of Radiology. The accompanying text is by author Paul Rosenthal. There are different versions, one for iPad, the other for iPhone or iPod Touch.

The app would be an excellent supplement to any science curriculum, for general exploration and discussion. It would be fun to use it along with a project that involves taking something apart.

Details: Touch Press, www.touchpress.com. Price: \$8. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: science, x-rays, exploration, mechanics, reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 1/8/2012. [WB]

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

ESRB Rating: Everyone



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





Future Releases & Updates

JANUARY 2012

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.

Bobble Bots

In toy stores this spring, Bobble Bots are fast moving \$6 micro-robots that scurry around in random directions, inside snap-together, LEGO-like doll houses that are sold separately. The durable, button-cell powered creatures were designed by Innovation First, makers of Hexbugs (www.hexbugs.com) and will be marketed as collectable toys by Mind Candy, the UK firm that publishes Moshi Monsters (www.moshimonsters.com). According to Moshi Monster creator Michael Acton Smith "We met the team from Innovation First at the Las Vegas Licensing Show last Summer and really hit it off with them. We were very impressed with their Hex products and were keen to find a way to work together when we discovered they were looking to do a girls range with the same technology. We're being careful not to over license the Moshi Monsters brand but this felt like something completely new and innovative so we wanted to give it a crack."

Never heard of Moshi Monsters? Just visit any bus stop. The well-designed virtual world for kids aged 6 to 12 years lets you create and take care of your own monster, who can then play games, chat with friends in Monstro City, and earn pets. The site is free at first, but can cost up to \$60/year.

Each robot will come with a special code that unlocks a virtual "Moshling," using the tried-and-true Webkinz model of merchandizing. The idea, Mind Candy hopes, is that once your child samples one, they'll want to get the entire set. Bobble Bots joins a growing line of Moshi-themed merchandise, that includes a Nintendo DS game, silver charms, rubber bands and plush toys.

Be warned that Bobble Bots are noisy -- they sound like little electric razors. The buzzing is caused by a quickly rotating counterweight that causes the Bots to bounce around on tiny silicon legs, a hundred or so times per second, creating tiny jumps. This up and down motion, when bounced on the silicon and plastic legs, causes the forward, chaotic and bug-like motion. The technology was adopted from the roach-like Hexbug Nano, with the addition of a tiny bobble head, and the noise is sure to drive any adult from the room. Perhaps that's the idea.

Details: Innovation First, Inc., www.hexbug.com. Price: \$6/each. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: construction. Entry date: 1/9/2012.

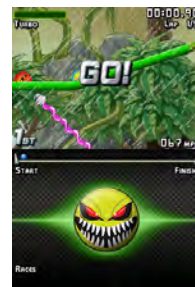


DaGeDar

This virtual racing game lets you battle against friends or evil spirits. Content includes 100 DaGeDar racing balls to unlock, collect and trade, as well as special limited edition characters. Each ball carries abilities of acceleration, top speed, defense and attack modes.

There are 30 tracks and DeGeDar points at the end of each race for rewards and bonuses.

Details: GameMill Entertainment, LLC, www.game-mill.com. Price: \$20. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: racing. Entry date: 11/30/2011.

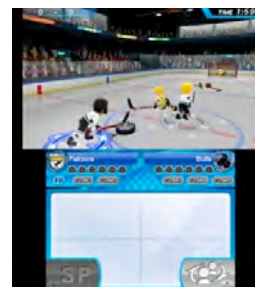




Deca Sports Extreme

Now available for the Nintendo DS, Deca Sports Extreme features 10 complete 3D sporting events including: Soccer; Tennis; Basketball; Ice Hockey; Bowling; Snowball Fight; Sumo Wrestling; Snowmobile Racing; Blowguns; and Trampoline. The games let you kick, shoot and bounce your way to the top, and feature power-ups and unlockable equipment not available in other versions of Deca Sports.

Details: Konami Digital Entertainment, Inc., www.konami.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: sports. Entry date: 7/7/2011.



InnoTab Software - Cars

This cartridge for the InnoTab asks children to use the touch screen or tilt sensor to play three games that drill math, logic, spelling and vocabulary skills. Or they can open an e-book and read the story of Lightning's quest to win the World Grand Prix.

Other content includes an e-book with a pop-up dictionary that uses animated definitions to teach some of the story words. Other software titles available include Mickey Mouse, Disney Princess, Disney Fairies, Penguins of Madagascar, Scooby Doo Mystery Madness, Dora the Explorer, Toy Story, and SpongeBob Squarepants.

Details: VTech Electronics North America, www.vtechkids.com. Price: \$25. Ages: 5-7. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: letters, spelling, reading, memory. Entry date: 9/20/2011.



Lexioc-Cognition

This app is designed to develop language understanding and build vocabulary, cognitive, memory and auditory skills in a playful way. The download and first level are free, additional five levels cost \$10 each.

The app was developed and tested by speech therapists. It focuses on understanding language through a series of questions to which the child has to find the right answers to. It features a drag and drop interface and content includes audio, illustrations and photography.

Questions are read aloud, allowing children who can not read to use the App. It is available in English, German, and French.

Details: Pappy GmbH, . Price: \$free. Ages: 3-10. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: language, vocabulary. Entry date: 12/6/2011.

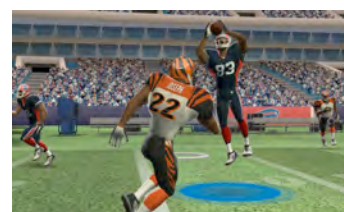


Madden NFL Football (3DS)

Designed for the Nintendo 3DS, this game features 32 NFL teams and stadiums, with three types of playcalling. GameFlow automatically selects the best play for the situation based on authentic NFL team gameplans; Arcade gives you more control over plays; and Classic lets you experience your favorite team's playbook.

You can compete in traditional 11-on-11 games or take your game back to the neighborhood with 5-on-5 games that have no penalties and no play clock, and the winner is the first team to score a set number of touchdowns. Utilizing the 3DS touch screen, you can draw up your own plays on the fly to create the ultimate line of scrimmage.

Details: EA Sports (Electronic Arts Inc.), www.eagames.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: football, sports. Entry date: 10/13/2011.



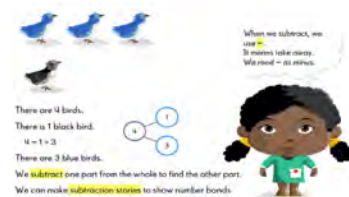


Math Buddies

Math Buddies is an interactive online Singapore Math Program for school and/or home use. Singapore Math uses a pictorial approach along with problem-solving strategies and word problems designed to teach students to connect different mathematical ideas. According to the press materials, "Math Buddies' flexible, online learning platform follows the same principles of the Singapore Math textbooks, combining multimedia technologies and animated characters with instructional strategies."

It features lessons to explain each math concept, step-by-step practice problems for independent and group learning; question analysis to identify common mistakes; and comprehensive assessments to track student progress. The program is designed to be used by teachers, homeschoolers, or parents. Prices are \$99 per subscription for home use and schools with less than 400 accounts, and \$65 per subscription for school use with 400 or more accounts, with the teacher's program free.

Details: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, www.mymathbuddies.com. Price: \$99. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: math. Entry date: 11/10/2011.



My First AAC

My First AAC (Augmentative Alternative Communication) turns your iPad into a communication board for young children.

There are 250 icons that are organized by category, not alphabetically, to mimic natural speech development.

The audio files feature either a boy or girl's voice, which also changes the gender of the child on the icons. It also features animated icons with sign language for words and phrases like "more" and "all done". See http://www.injini.net/?page_id=382 for more information. Published by NCsoft.

Details: Project Injini, <http://www.injini.net>. Price: \$25. Ages: 18 mos - 7. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: language. Entry date: 10/12/2011.

Need for Speed The Run

This version of Need For Speed takes you through "the run" -- a race across the country from San Francisco to New York. There are no speed limits, no rules and no allies.

You must battle bad drivers on dangerous roads that include icy mountain passes and narrow canyons, while evading the police. Developed by Black Box for EA.

Details: Electronic Arts, Inc., www.ea.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 10-up. Platform: PlayStation 3, Wii, Xbox 360, Nintendo 3DS, Windows. Teaches/Purpose: sports, racing. Entry date: 6/10/2011.



One Laptop Per Child XO-3

The XO-3 tablet was announced at the 2012 CES show: we know that the hardware is being made by Marvell for production in 2012. Here are the specs of the three OLPC models, according to press materials.

- XO 1.5 looks like the older green XO computer. It has a VIA processor (replacing AMD) to give it twice the speed, four times the memory, and the ability to run both the Linux and Windows.

- XO 1.75 is like 1.5, with the addition of a 8.9 inch touch-sensitive display. The XO 1.75 contains a Marvell ARM processor that promises "2x speed at 1/4 the power" for \$150 or less.

- XO 3.0 – The XO 3.0 is tablet also powered by the Marvell ARM processor, with a multi-touch screen and a back-facing camera. The batteries can be charged in many ways, including through a solar cover.

Details: One Laptop Per Child Foundation, www.laptop.org. Price: \$180. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Sugar. Teaches/Purpose: a laptop for developing countries. Entry date: 1/8/2012.





Rayman Origins

This is a 2D side-scrolling, platforming adventure, featuring full 4-player co-op. In the game, the Glade of Dreams is overrun by Darktoons, and the Fairy Council invokes Rayman to save the day. Rayman teams up with his best friend, Globox, and two crafty wizards, the Teensies. Together they will try to restore peace to the Glade.

The game features many of the classic characters, along with a new world of characters and environments, totaling more than 100 characters and 12 unique environments. You will discover the roots of Rayman by collecting pieces of the Glade's history and assembling them to reveal the truth behind Rayman's origins. Other features include four player jump-in/jump out, co-op gameplay. You can play as Rayman in the solo campaign, or have up to three friends join at any time to play as Globox or as one of the two Teensies. The game also features more than 60 levels, and you can unlock new abilities progressively and return to previous levels to discover new paths and secrets. Developed by UBlart Montpellier.

Details: UbiSoft, Inc., www.ubisoft.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 6-up. Platform: PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 7/6/2011.



Woogie 2

Woogie 2 is a five legged plush smart phone holder. Unlike the original Woogie, it does not have an internal speaker. Instead, it is designed to let you plug in your own headphones, to compensate for the fact that the device also blocks your speakers.

The five legs bend easily and are weighted with pellets to serve as a screen holder. It could be ideal for a long car ride -- it is very snugly. The device doesn't limit content, however, it is possible to download a free Woogie app to let you preview content from Iceberg Kids, who designed Woogie in cooperation with Griffin. The app, called Woogie Sesame Street Sampler was created by Scrollmotion, does a nice job narrating some basic Sesame Street stories; additional titles are sold as in-app sales.

Details: Griffin Technologies, <http://www.griffintechology.com>. Price: \$20. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: a protective case for the iPod, iPhone or Android phone. Entry date: 12/20/2011.

