



Children's TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

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Nintendo's *Next Move*

Are two screens better than one? Find out on page 4

Children's Technology

Review

July 2012

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



Quality Quote of the Week

"Only the rarest kind of best in anything can be good enough for the young," is a quote I like to keep at the top of every presentation about choosing apps these days. It comes from the English writer Walter de la Mare (1873–1956) who became best known for his stories and poems for children.



Case in point? See **Little Fox Music Box Children's Songs** on page 10.

What would Fred Rogers say about the iPad?

We can only guess. But last month I was able to pose this question to a group of researchers and record their answers, as part of a series called Fred Forward Minutes, made possible by the Fred Rogers Center. The interviews took place within a few feet of one of Fred's famed sweaters and sneakers, inspiring us all to remember the ideals of this children's television pioneer as we thought about the answer. In brief, it is safe to say that the iPad has given the children's interactive space a clear bridge to the future and it's time to start tapping the potential, for the benefit of all children. Here's a link to the interviews

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLAAA960B4FA0CFC54>

Learn About Glass

Which is stronger, steel or glass? Can you name a famous computer inventor who used huge sheets of glass to build windows and stair steps? Can you really break a glass with your voice? Let's learn more about this amazing substance in this issue of LittleClickers, found on page 3.

This Year's ISTE Buzzword? BYOD

It stands for Bring Your Own Device, and the idea is that as long as you have a laptop, smart phone or tablet that can get to the cloud, it is possible for students (or teachers) to get to digital content. In theory. CTR's roving video reporter Scott Traylor was on the job, and has already started posting videos at <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2D3CED551AAA6668>

Are Two Screens Better Than One? Nintendo Has Proof

Anyone over 20 can remember a day when screens were back-breakingly heavy CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) filled boxes made for the evening news or The Andy Griffith Show. Video game hardware was an add-on -- more of an after thought. But after this year's E3, it is clear that another interesting set of interactive play patterns based on SSBS (Small Screen, Big Screen) are starting to develop. Have a look on page 4.



July 2012

Volume 20, No. 7, Issue 148

Editor Warren Buckleitner, Ph.D.,
(warren@childrenstech.com) [WB]

Editorial Coordinator & Circulation
Lisa DellaFave (lisa@childrenstech.com) [LD]

Office Manager Megan Billitti
(megan@childrenstech.com)

Contributing Editor Chris Crowell [CC]

Contributor Scott Traylor

Interns Ben Kates (video)

ONE YEAR SUBSCRIPTIONS are \$30/year, for 12 issues, \$120 for print & electronic issues including online database access. Issues are sent monthly. Site subscriptions available. Send payment to *Children's Technology Review™*, 120 Main Street, Flemington, NJ 08822 or call 800-993-9499. Visit www.childrenstech.com to learn more.

PRODUCT SUBMISSIONS. Send one product with release information to *Lisa DellaFave, Editorial Coordinator, 120 Main Street, Flemington, NJ 08822 (Phone: 908-284-0404)*. Send app codes by email to lisa@childrenstech.com.

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PUBLISHER INFORMATION *Children's Technology Review™* (ISSN 1555-242X) is published monthly (12 issues) by Active Learning Associates, Inc. Send address changes or new subscriptions to *Children's Technology Review™*, 120 Main Street, Flemington, NJ 08822. **Use of this publication for any commercial publishing activity without prior written permission is strictly prohibited.** Readers are subject to the TERMS OF USE found at <http://childrenstech.com/disclaimer>

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GLASS

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

Thanks to Deborah Ricard, who is a Technology Instructor for **Computer Explorers** at www.computerexplorers.com for this month's topic. The web-based (html) version of this page is at <http://www.littleclickers.com> with live links, plus a place to report any errors. Note that CTR and COMPUTER EXPLORERS do not have commercial interests in the sites listed on this page. Librarians and teachers are permitted to copy this page for non-profit use. To suggest a future topic or to report a bad link, please contact the editor, Warren Buckleitner [WB] warren@childrenstech.com, or call 908-284-0404 (9 - 3 PM, EST).

Steve Jobs— it turns out—was more than a computer inventor. He also invented with glass. Besides using slippery glass for the screens on the iPhone and iPad, he also used huge sheets of glass to make a staircase. According to US Glass Industry News Network at <http://bit.ly/LRxN9i> he also planned on using huge sheets of curved glass to make a new circle-shaped headquarters for Apple. Let's learn more about this amazing substance.



1. How do you make glass?

At <http://bit.ly/isXLM> science lover Theo Gray shows us that glass is made of sand and lime (or borax). The lime helps the sand melt evenly when heated. You can watch a movie of Theo making a glass ornament using a very hot charcoal grill. You can also learn that the first glass was first discovered around 7,000 years ago by Phoenician merchants.

2. Which is stronger -- Steel or glass?

Until last year, it was steel. But at <http://bit.ly/hp4F3d> you learn how scientists have mixed metals into glass, making it stronger than steel.

3. What is Gorilla Glass (and why should you care?)

If you've ever touched an iPhone or tablet, you've probably touched Gorilla Glass. There aren't really any gorillas involved. At <http://www.corninggorillaglass.com> you learn that Gorilla Glass is merely a brand name for a new type of glass that has gone through a chemical strengthening process where large ions are "stuffed" into the glass surface making it slippery and strong -- perfect for phones, tablets and sun glasses.

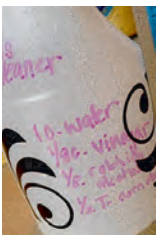


4. Where is the largest sheet of glass?

According to <http://bit.ly/iNdydd>, one of Apple's stores in Sydney Australia has 15-meter (45-foot) flat glass windows; the largest plates of laminated glass in the world. They are used to create a giant clear storefront. See some photos at <http://bit.ly/rpOnuE>

5. Is glass a liquid or a solid?

There is no clear answer. At <http://bit.ly/dmyWey> you learn that the best way to describe glass is that is an "amorphous solid" that acts like a solid but has some characteristics of a liquid. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/lrs3>



APPLICATION: Make your own glass cleaner

Search on "glass cleaning recipe" and you'll find hundreds of different homemade solutions for making windows sparkle. One good example is <http://bit.ly/JtUtu4> where you learn how you can get a used plastic bottle and mix up a batch of water, vinegar and a little bit of corn starch to make some glass sparkle.

- 1/4 c. rubbing alcohol
- 1/4 c. white vinegar
- 1 Tbsp cornstarch
- 2 c. warm water

YouTube LittleClickers YouTube Playlist: **Glass**

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6DDB16DC16C9D00E>



How Nintendo's Wii U Will Try to Reel You In

by Warren Buckleitner

First a tiny history lesson. Anyone older than 20 can remember how heavy TVs used to be, especially if you had to drag one across the room.

Before 1970 or so, nearly all TVs used glass CRTs (Cathode Ray Tubes) along with a television tuner. They were designed specifically for pulling in Walter Cronkite's evening news broadcast, or The Andy Griffith Show after school. These bulky boxes were for sitting and watching, and not for interacting. Other than to get up and change the channel that is.

Video game hardware was an add-on that also didn't move once it was plugged into the set. In other words, it didn't fit in your pocket or come to you. You came to it. People called them "game consoles," a name still used today.

As a result, there is an entire generation of 30-something video game players that think of "video games" as something very different than today's multi-touch generation.

Fast forward to now. Today's TV is based on pixels and LCDs. A new generation of HD (high definition) screens provides cinematic 16:9 size ratios that have dropped in price and increased in quality. We are now at a point when you can no longer buy a CRT TV. TV technology and associated "stay put" psychology is gone.

Could it also be that the entire psychology of TV-based interactivity is starting to change, as well? Have the Kinect, Wii and Sony Move started to become integral to the living room media ecosystem? If so, Wii U is Nintendo's future.

The Psychology of Two-Screen Interactivity

In the spring of 2004, Nintendo surprised the gaming press with the jaw droppingly different design for the Gameboy, called the Nintendo DS. I recall a debate about what the letters DS meant. Some said Developer System, but I always thought Nintendo really meant Dual Screen. Having two clear screens instead of one—one for touch and control—the other for viewing, was certainly new. At the time there were some who viewed the DS as a toy, preferring Sony's PSP, which came out later that year. It had a much larger, clear 16 by 9 screen that did not have touch. For many serious gamers, the choice seemed obvious. The PSP was sleek, glossy black and pretty, and the graphics looked amazingly large and clear. It could also play movies from tiny DVDs called UMDs and adaptations of popular PS2 games.

But it was the Nintendo DS that won the battle, thanks to Pokémon, Mario and Wario. Today, there are more than twice the number of Nintendo DS units worldwide than the PSP



Interactive media is more about being interactive, and less about looking good.

(151.52 vs. 71.4 million) according to <http://bit.ly/1wrMeW> and <http://bit.ly/N7iTL4>. The lesson? Interactive media is more about being interactive and less about looking good. Nintendo has proven this repeatedly. Can the new Wii U, coming in just a few months, continue the winning record?

Things are more challenging in this age of iPad, app and multi-touch. But the Wii U is evidence that Nintendo still has some tricks left, especially with eight years of two-screen development experience. Want some proof? Here are 17 new interactive SSBS (small screen, big screen) techniques (or affordances) that the Wii U with GamePad brings. Many were captured on video, at <http://youtu.be/sngjghaoaA>. Keep in mind that these are early observations, and names of games and techniques might change.

1. Outfielder's Mitt

Take the perspective of the fielder, with a view of the ball coming your way. When the ball "hits" your "mitt" (the GamePad) you feel a rumble.

2. Steering Wheel

Automotive engineers take note: the accelerometers and shape of the Wii U GamePad controller turn it into an effective and accurate steering wheel. In the Wii U version of Rayman, the wheel is used to control a 360° maze. Yes, you could've done this with a standard Wii Remote, but the shape of the GamePad makes it seem more intuitive, and the small screen can tell you what is going on and where you are going.



Watch these techniques in action, at <http://youtu.be/sngjkhaoaA>.

3. Magnifying Wheel

Cross a magnifying glass with a steering wheel and you get the idea of this technique. In Donkey Kong Crash Course (part of the Nintendo World suite of games) the GamePad screen shows a small part of the big screen for a closer look at the details of some levers, needed to make it through the maze.

4. Shield

Stop flying arrows from piercing your pretend armer with your magic shield. Just hold the GamePad up for protection.

5. Private Menu

I spotted this technique being used several times. The player holding the Wii U GamePad can choose pitches without tipping off the other players, aka the batter in Ubisoft Sports Connection. This technique can be used to turn the GamePad controller into a private DJ console, in Ubisoft's Just Dance, so that one of the players can choose the upcoming moves. Besides keeping the information from the view of the other players, it can unclutter the big screen for a more cinematic experience.

6. X-Ray (or Night) Vision

Offers a view of the interactive space to just one player that the other players might not have, so the person with the GamePad has more information. In Nintendo Land: Luigi's Haunted Castle, the person with the GamePad can see where the ghosts are hiding -- the other players can't.

7. Hide and Go Seek

The person with the GamePad gets a global view of where the other players are hiding, whereas the players with the traditional controllers can only see the split screen.

8. Balancing Act

Can you balance a tray, while walking on the Wii Balance Board? The Wii U GamePad contains accelerometers and a compass, so it knows which way is up, flat and north. In Wii Fit U, you are required to deliver refreshments as quickly as possible. You can see what you are carrying on the screen.



Nintendo Wii U Fact Sheet

Launches: Holiday 2012. The actual date is a surprise, Nintendo style.

Size: 1.8 inches high, 10.5 inches deep and 6.8 inches long.

Weight: 3.41 pounds (1.5 kg).

Appearance: The Wii U game unit is about the size of a large, old-fashioned CD-ROM drive.

Wii U GamePad: The Wii U GamePad controller creates a second window into the interactive world. That "window" is a clear 6.2-inch, 16:9 aspect ratio LCD touch screen, as well as traditional button controls and two analog sticks. Inputs include a +Control Pad, L/R sticks, L/R stick buttons, A/B/X/Y buttons, L/R buttons, ZL/ZR buttons, Power button, HOME button, -/SELECT button, +/START button, and TV CONTROL button. The GamePad also includes motion control (powered by an accelerometer, gyroscope and geomagnetic sensor), a front-facing camera, a microphone, stereo speakers, rumble features, a sensor bar, an included stylus and support for Near Field Communication (NFC) functionality. It is powered by a rechargeable lithium-ion battery and weighs approximately 1.1 pounds (500 g).

Other Controllers: The Wii U console is capable of supporting two Wii U GamePad controllers and up to four Wii Remote (or Wii Remote Plus) controllers or Wii U Pro Controllers. Older Wii accessories such as the Nunchuk, Classic Controller and Wii Balance Board will also work.

CPU (Central Processing Unit): IBM Power-based multi-core processor.

GPU (Graphics Processing Unit): AMD Radeon-based High Definition GPU.

Storage: Wii U uses internal flash memory. It also supports SD memory cards and external USB storage.

Media: Both new Wii U disks and older Wii optical discs.

Video Output: Supports 1080p, 1080i, 720p, 480p and 480i. Compatible cables include HDMI, Wii D-Terminal, Wii Component Video, Wii RGB, Wii S-Video Stereo AV and Wii AV.

Audio Output: Uses six-channel PCM linear output via HDMI connector, or analog output via the AV Multi Out connector.

Networking: Wii U can access the Internet via wireless (IEEE 802.11b/g/n) connection. The console features four USB 2.0 connectors – two in the front and two in the rear – that support Wii LAN Adapters.

Wii Compatibility: According to Nintendo, "nearly all Wii software and accessories can be used with Wii U."

9. Clear the Path

The GamePad holder assists the other players, by dropping in more health or destroying obstacles. It's like clearing the brush for the other players, so they can move easier. This adds a new twist to coop play.

10. Shuffleboard

This is a very fun control mechanic that feels like you're sliding coins across a slippery surface to hit a target.

11. Sling Shot

If Angry Birds were on the Wii U, you could use the GamePad to "pull back" on the screen, increasing the tension of the sling shot, and then lifting your finger to release, simulating a bow and arrow, or sling shot. It is a fun and powerful feeling.

12. Artist's Palette

For doodling or putting a graphic idea into a game like Pictionary, the GamePad can serve up a set of paint and drawing tools, reserving the entire area of the big screen as your canvas.

13. Game Level Editor

In Scribblenauts Unlimited (Warner Bros.), the GamePad is used to offer a specialized set of tools which can be used to adjust the game automatically.

14. QWERTY Keyboard

Text entry has always been a problem for video game consoles. The 6.2 inch screen on the GamePad can double as a temporary QWERTY keyboard, when needed.

15. Photo Booth

Because the Wii U GamePad has a front-facing camera and a microphone, it can be used to take a snapshot of your face for use in an avatar or for synchronous communication with another player.

16. Telephone (FaceTime or Skype)

Stereo speakers and the microphone, combined with the Wii U's Wi-Fi connection make it possible to connect with anyone at any time. It has not been confirmed that Skype will work with the Wii U, however it seems logical that "Skype-like" features could be a popular Wii U feature.

17. Panorama View

The GamePad controller has everything you need to turn your living room into a double decker London tour bus, so you feel like you're someplace else, in the first person. You can adjust the level of zoom with the analog stick.

These are just some of the new interaction techniques that will continue to influence the ever-changing word "screen." We also know that screens today are a lot easier to move across the room.



Wii U Planned Release Titles

According to Nintendo's Press site, these titles will be available the day that the Wii U system launches.

2K Sports

NBA 2K13

D3Publisher

Ben 10: Omniverse
Family Party: 30 Great Games (working title)
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game

Electronic Arts

Mass Effect 3
Maximum Games
Jett Tailfin

NAMCO BANDAI

TANK! TANK! TANK!
TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT™ 2 (working title)

Nintendo

LEGO City: Undercover
New Super Mario Bros.™ U
NINJA GAIDEN™ 3: Razor's Edge
Nintendo Land
SiNG (working title)
Wii U Panorama View (working title)
Game & Wario (working title)
Pikmin 3
Project P-100 (working title)
Wii Fit U

SEGA

Aliens: Colonial Marines
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed

THQ

Darksiders II

Ubisoft

Assassin's Creed III
Just Dance 4
Marvel Avengers: Battle for Earth
Rabbids Land
Sports Connection
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2013
ZombiU
Rayman Legends

Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment

Scribblenauts Unlimited
Batman: Arkham City Armored Edition

Broken Rules

Chasing Aurora

Frozenbyte

Trine 2™: Director's Cut

Gaijin Games

Runner2: Future Legend of Rhythm Alien

Nicalis

Aban Hawkins & the 1,001 Spikes

Pwnee Studios

Cloudberry Kingdom



Feature Reviews

JULY 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.

Amazing Spider-Man, The

Take on the role of a young Peter Parker and discover some new Spider-Man powers and Super Hero responsibilities, in this one player NYC based adventure. Testers found the game easy to learn, but found it to be less fun than past Spider-Man games, with "less to do." For example, "you can jump off the highest building, and not even die."

New features include a "Web Rush" mechanic that lets you swing freely from building to building as you look for criminal activity from the likes of Rhino, Iguana, Felicia Hardy, Scorpion, and others.

The game story takes place after the events of the upcoming feature film.

Developed by Beenox for Xbox 360, PS3, Wii and Nintendo 3DS and by Other Ocean for Nintendo DS. Prices are \$60 for the Xbox 360 and PS3 versions, \$50 for the Wii version, and \$30 for the Nintendo 3DS and DS versions. Rated Teen for all platforms except Nintendo DS, which is rated E10+.

Details: Activision, Inc., www.activision.com. Price: \$60. Ages: 10-up. Platform: PlayStation 3*, Xbox 360, Wii, Nintendo 3DS, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.6 stars. Entry date: 7/2/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	72%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	6	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	6	



Animal Crosswords

Designed for children just beginning to learn to read and spell, this solid collection of 56 crossword puzzles are based on 300 common spelling words.

Puzzles are sorted by eight animal groups: sea; farm; jungle; pets; small animals; birds; forest; and the zoo. Each crossword has one animal as a theme, so children will get experience spelling 56 animal names. The puzzles in each animal group increase in difficulty from easy to hard.

Features include the ability to switch between uppercase and lowercase letters; the ability to display the entire alphabet or only those letters that appear in the crossword; and a "clean up and start over" mode. Parental control settings let you reset all crosswords and show/hide correct letters in crossword (designed for small children who can't spell completely yet). The game is ad, link and in-app purchase free.

This is an app that grows on you the more you play. Besides being good for playfully introducing site words, it could be a good cooperative learning experience because more than one child can help assemble words by trial and error if necessary.

Details: OkiDokiApps, . Price: \$0.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: spelling, language, logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 6/7/2012. [WB]

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





Bizzy Bear Builds a House

This second addition to the Bizzy Bear series has some design problems, despite excellent graphics, a good theme and outstanding Nosy-Crow-style child narration.

Based on the Candlewick book by Benji Davies, Bizzy Bear Builds a House takes place at Sunny Farm. You help Bizzy Bear construct a new house by following a sequence of events that are spoon fed to you on seven screens, by way of blue dots that appear on the graphics.

The jobs include operating the "digger," (British for backhoe), loading bricks, starting a concrete mixer and moving a "load lifter" (lift truck). The digger doesn't actually "dig" when you touch the shovel, however, reducing your interest in playing with the items in the story. Each page comes with a looping reminder system that is unnecessary. As with other Nosy Crow apps, clever lines of highlighted narration can be triggered by touching items on the screen.

Features include text highlighting, both Read and Play mode or Read by Myself modes, with no narration, and the ability to choose from three leveled text options, to match a child's reading ability.

Details: Nosy Crow, . Price: \$3.99. Ages: 2-4. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, cause and effect. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 6/22/2012. [WB]

Brave: The Video Game

Following a tried-and-true formula, this one-or two-player (on the console version) action adventure lets you play as Merida and other characters from the Pixar movie Brave. Our testers were less than excited about "yet another movie game." Still the format is fun.

We played the first two levels of the Wii version and found the format to be predictable. The best part -- you can play alone or with another player in co-op (drop in/drop out) mode.

Set in mythical Scotland, there are plenty of monsters to kill. Fortunately you can choose from four challenge levels in the preferences (we picked the medium level and found it to be doable).

We liked the strong female lead character, but wondered why you have to smash everything in sight (including flowers) in order to earn coins. The coins buy upgrades, such as weapons. Bottlenecks are few, but they still exist (we found jumping up a cliff to be challenging, and the hint system is strange). Weapons include a sword or bow and arrow, and there are short mini-games and puzzles to solve on the Kinect, Wii and PlayStation 3 Move versions. The DS game offers: single player gameplay with Merida; quests and adventures; and mini games and puzzles. Prices are \$50 for PS3, Xbox 360 and Wii, and \$30 for Nintendo DS and PC/Mac. The bottom line? This is a fun game, but it follows a very typical format used by hundreds of others. It is light on the learning and problem solving, heavy on the fighting, moving and unlocking. The two player option would be good for a parent/child team; definitely good for a rainy weekend. Developed by Behaviour Interactive for Disney.

Details: Disney Interactive Studios, . Price: \$50. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Wii, Nintendo DS, Windows, Mac OSX, Xbox Kinect, PlayStation Move. Teaches/Purpose: logic, money. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 6/12/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	78%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	8	



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





Coin Catcher

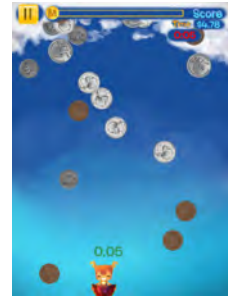
Simple but potentially frustrating, this fast-paced coin collecting game uses a tried-and-true tilt-to-steer format. The idea is to quickly tilt left or right to collect as many falling coins as possible before the timer runs out.

High scores can be saved on a leaderboard. The objective is to teach children about money values as they progress through 50 levels of play.

In the story mode, the more you play, the more features and money you can unlock. You can also end up with unwanted items, such as candy or soda, which take away money. There are also dumbbells to help you get stronger or a pirate ship to increase your catching speed. Progress is saved automatically. Testers found that it was easy to get into a mode where the coins move too fast, which can be frustrating -- you have to learn to let a lot go in order to catch the more valuable items. If a child starts with the story mode, this problem can be averted.

Details: PlayMoolah, <http://playmoolah.com/>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad, Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: money values, coins. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 6/21/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	78%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	7	



Five Little Monkeys Go Shopping

This iPad adaption of the Eileen Christelow books (www.lmhbooks.com) contains another adaptation of the Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed song. This one is enjoyable.

Options let you toggle on/off the busy background music and/or news updates, both on by default.

In the story, Mama takes her five little monkeys shopping for clothes. "Stay right here," she says, "AND DON'T GO WANDERING OFF!" But one little monkey has to go to the bathroom, and two little monkeys get thirsty. Then three little monkey friends arrive, and four little monkeys decide to go help find the others. . . . Will Mama ever have all five of her little monkeys together again?

Chris Crowell: "I showed this app to my students as a large group read along and they enjoyed it tremendously. This is an excellent take on "Five Little Monkeys" theme, which could be a nice springboard for a math activity."

Details: Oceanhouse Media, . Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 3/23/2012. [WB]

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



Five little monkeys and their mama walk down to the river for a picnic supper.



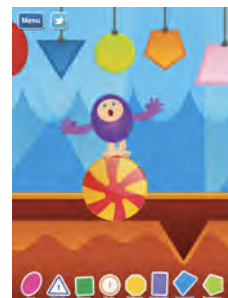
GazziliShapes

Solid, chatty, but fairly well designed, this structured set of six puzzle challenges provide practice finding and matching the basic shapes.

The challenge level varies, for example, to get across a screen, you have to fill in holes in the ground. When your child successfully completes a level, a portion of the 'GazziliFunPage' opens. We did not like the twitter icon on every screen, and getting started with some of the puzzles is less than obvious. Options let you toggle on or off the sounds, instructions and background music.

Details: GazziliWorld, <http://gazziliworld.com/>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: math, geometry, shapes, hexagon, pentagon, triangle, circles. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 6/7/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	78%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	8	





LEGO Batman 2: DC Superheroes

This sequel to LEGO Batman has several firsts for the designer (TT Games). The graphics are improved throughout, and, for the first time the famous LEGO-ized characters can talk (on the Xbox version we tested).

The action is fast-paced, and the interactive design is smooth, creating one very nice LEGO title.

In the game, Batman and Robin join forces with other famous DC super heroes including Superman, Wonder Woman and Green Lantern to stop bad guys that include Lex Luther and the Joker. The goal? To save Gotham City.

To get around, you walk, run, fly or control vehicles that include the Batmobile, Batwing and Batboat (console versions). There are new suits and gadgets including Batman's Power Suit and Robin's Hazard Suit equipped with a Pressure Cannon that can absorb and dispense hazardous liquids. Content includes 50 DC Comics characters including The Flash, Wonder Woman, and Green Lantern. Features include the ability to use free-roaming flight, freeze and push objects with Freeze-Breath, and heat up and cut holes through objects with Heat Vision. Play with friends and family in drop-in/dro-out co-op gameplay.

Prices are \$50 for Xbox 360 and PS3 versions, \$40 for the Nintendo Wii, 3DS, and PS Vita, and \$30 for the Nintendo and PC. Developed by TT games for Warner Brothers. This is a great big screen adventure.

Details: Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, Inc., www.warnerbros.com.

Price: \$50. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Wii, Nintendo 3DS, Vita, Nintendo DS, Windows. Teaches/Purpose: logic, reading, problem solving. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 6/15/2012. [WB]

Little Fox Music Box

Well illustrated, musical and highly interactive, Little Fox Music Box is a sing-along songbook with 100 interactive elements that have been cleverly embedded in three classic songs: London Bridge, Evening Song and Old MacDonald had a Farm (spelled in the app Old Mac Donald).

Visually, this app makes a great first impression. A good place to start is the studio where you can touch anything to explore sounds and rhythms. Everything makes a noise including birds, frogs and the dishes. We've seen this type of activity attempted many times before, rarely so well.

Features include a Karaoke Mode which can be toggled on or off from the first screen, letting you assume the role of the lead singer; a good way for a child to put themselves into the app. There are also three language options, which can also be toggled on or off. For a good musical, language experience, get this app. Note: this app is free to download until July 7, 2012.

Details: goodbeans, . Price: \$free. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone.

Teaches/Purpose: music, rhythm, German or English, language. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 6/29/2012. [CC]

Madagascar 3: The Video Game

They're baaaack, for more two-player, co-op problem solving adventures, the zany Madagascar movie animals.


This time, you explore a circus, assuming the identity of one of the animals, as you try to find your way home home under cover of a traveling circus. You will travel across Europe to promote the circus by completing missions and performing publicity stunts. The game also features a mini-game.

You have the choice of story mode or you can jump directly to the challenges, playing as Alex the Lion, Marty the Zebra, Gloria the Hippo or Melman the Giraffe. There are three game save slots, and closed captions are provided for non-readers.


Each character has specific attributes needed to get through a level. If swimming is involved, Gloria is the best option, for example. We tested the Wii version and noticed some rather crude camera angles, and some levels are more fun than others, but all in all, if you have the patience, this game offers a nice blend of problem solving and collaborative play.

Details: D3Publisher of America, Inc., www.d3publisher.us. Price: \$30. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Wii, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Nintendo DS, Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic, socialization, problem solving. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 3/5/2012. [WB]

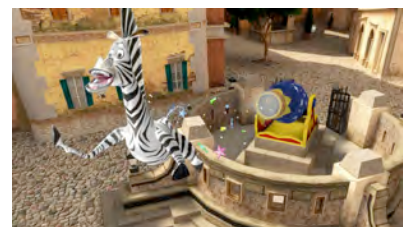
Ease of Use	9	96%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	




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




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





Monster's Socks

This 12-screen adventure is about a child-like monster (who is not scary) who wakes up to discover that he has lost his socks.

So he goes on an adventure that includes making a bridge, sailing a boat, and flying to the moon. The story resembles "Where the Wild Things Are" in some ways.

Especially noteworthy: the way this title breaks away from typical page flips and lets you instead freely move forward or backward through the story.

So it is possible to rewind if you want to see another scene again. In addition, there are simple interactive ingredients on each page. For example, you can unfold a bridge to help the Monster get across a stream, a process that is a bit tricky to learn the first time.

Emerging reading experiences are supported by the narrated text blocks, combined with a highly responsive format that children will want to return to time after time. Testers found the monster's English voice to be "strange" (but he is, after all a monster). We did not test other language versions. The graphics are both tasteful and beautiful. Testers also did not care for the anticlimactic ending, where he simply wakes up and finds his socks. All in all this is a wonderful contribution to any virtual ebook shelf. Available in: English, Chinese, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish.

Details: Martin Hughes, www.monstersocks.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, causality, language experience. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 5/25/2012. [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]

Picture Me Cute As Can Bee


Using the iPad's camera, this electronic edition of the printed Picture Me book lets you put up to ten of your own photos inside the story, peeking out of windows on the pages.

While the story -- about dressing up for a springtime party, is less than compelling and the interactivity isn't tied directly to the child's touches, the idea of putting your own photos into the story works like a charm. It is also an easy process. You can snap a photo with the device camera, in real time, or choose from photos in your own library. Photos are easy to position into the pages.

If you've ever wanted to see what you look like in a fuzzy bunny suit, now is your chance. The story is less than interesting, and it isn't possible to quickly move between pages. We didn't like the email or photo icon on each page (a toddler could possibly take hundreds of screen shots). With supervision, this shouldn't be a problem.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: language, reading, self concept. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 3/23/2012. [WB]

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




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



Ease of Use	8	84%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	8	





Reading Rainbow App

This "free" app, hosted by LeVar Burton, is a library service for interactive books and videos targeting children ages 3 to 9. The idea is to give a child a library of books customized to your child's interests. The interface is less than impressive, with frequent prompts telling children to get their parents to subscribe.

The initial download is free, and you can choose a single book as well as view introductory videos. You can subscribe to the 150 interactive books, with updates to expand the library, for \$9.99 a month. The subscription is for your iTunes account and can be used on additional iPads with payments. Subscriptions are auto-renewed unless auto-renewal is turned off at least 24 hours before the end of the current period (you can turn off auto-renewal at any time from your iTunes account settings). Subscriptions may not be canceled during the active subscription period.

Other features include: 16 video field trips and more to come; interactive activities in every book; reward program to motivate reading; and parent dashboard to share a child's reading progress. We were less than impressed with the interactive features of the books; while the core content is strong. It seems like a lot to pay for not that many books.

Details: Reading Rainbow, . Price: \$free, \$10/month. Ages: 3-9. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.5 stars. Entry date: 6/14/2012. [WB]

Toca Train

Fun and great for spatial relations, but lacking the pure joy of past Toca Boca titles, Toca Train lets you take control of your very own short toy train.

You can easily adjust the view, moving in or out of the cab to take a helicopter view of your train as it moves through a playful countryside. The train has three speeds, and it is possible to honk the horn, or sip the conductor's tea.

At various points, you are notified that a passenger or load of cargo is approaching. You can drop people or pick them up (an applied lesson in basic math), or use a slightly confusing (at first) crane to load or unload fun payloads, such as a giant pumpkin.

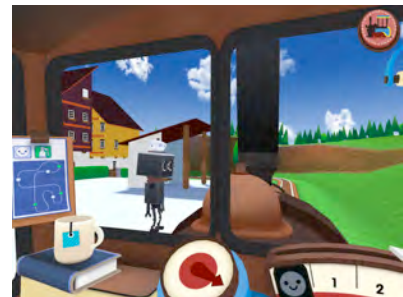
Our testers wanted to do more with their train, perhaps changing cars or seeing the tea disappear. This isn't a deal breaker. For \$2, this is a solid app that sets a new standard in the way it allows children to adjust the view of the countryside, from a moving train. See the video review at <http://youtu.be/S8M8JNyXgio>.

Details: Toca Boca, . Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-9. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, some math. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 6/7/2012. [WB]

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



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





Touch and Write

This app turns your iPad into a slippery letter or numeral game, where your job is to fill in all the outlines (both upper and lower case) with your choice of 16 substances like shaving cream or chocolate frosting. If you stray outside the line, you are gently corrected and given another chance, which is a nice touch. Each letter is then shown in the context of a short word, like "ape" or "car."

As you fill in each letter, your finger is guided by a set of cupcake-dots, making it fun to follow the lines and "eat" the cupcakes. After you complete a set of letters, you can play a short breakout-style game that has no relationship to letters or numerals.

It is also possible to turn on/off the cupcake hints, adjust the music or change the backgrounds. You can also put in your own word lists, making this a customizable experience.

Chris Crowell noticed some inconsistency between some letters. For example, a child might fill in the letter a with a round body, but then will be shown a "printers a" in context of the word. This might seem minor, but in a letter practice app, it is a significant mistake.

The sweet food-related themes might be suggestive to children who struggle with diet, as well.

All things considered, this app is easy to use and could be a consideration if your job is to help children learn to write letters and numerals. Note that there is also a cursive version called Touch and Write Cursive Edition. See also Letter School or Letter Writer Oceans.

Details: FizzBrain, . Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: writing, number and letter formation (both upper and lower case), letter recognition. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 6/19/2012. [WB]

Touch and Write Cursive Letters

The cursive edition of "Touch and Write" app turns your iPad into a slippery letter or numeral game, where your job is to fill in all the outlines (both upper and lower case) with your choice of 16 substances like shaving cream or chocolate frosting. If you stray outside the line, you are gently corrected and given another chance, which is a nice touch. Each letter is then shown in the context of a short word, like "ape" or "Australia."

As you fill in each letter, your finger is guided by a set of cupcake-dots, making it fun to follow the lines and "eat" the cupcakes. After you complete a set of letters, you can play a short breakout-style game that has no relationship to letters or numerals.

It is also possible to turn on/off the cupcake hints, adjust the music or change the backgrounds. You can also put in your own word lists, making this a customizable experience.

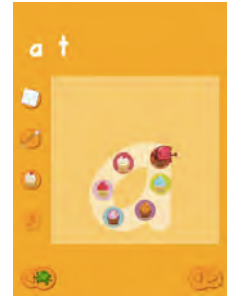
There's a nice range of words that you can build, although they are presented with a strange word-wrap problem.

As with the print edition, the sweet food-related themes might be suggestive to children who struggle with diet, as well.

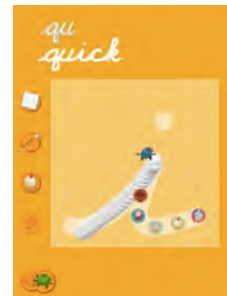
All things considered, this app is easy to use and could be a consideration if your job is to help children learn to write letters and numerals. Note that there is also a print version. See also Letter School or the Barking Dog titles.

Details: FizzBrain, www.fizzbrain.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 6-12. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: cursive letter formation, writing, upper/lower case. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 6/19/2012. [WB]

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



Ease of Use	8
Educational	9
Entertaining	8
Design Features	9
Good Value	8
84%	





Future Releases & Updates

JULY 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.

American Mensa Academy

This is a brain training game created in collaboration with Mensa. It features 100 replayable levels of mini-games and challenges, as well as test designed to calculate your Mensa score. Developed by Silverball Studios. Coming July 27, 2012.

Details: Square Enix, Inc., www.square-enix.com/na/. Price: \$na. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Windows, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: logic, problem solving. Entry date: 6/21/2012.

Batman: Arkham City Armored Edition

The Wii U version of Batman: Arkham City Armored Edition delivers the same story and gameplay as the original title, but features "enhanced gameplay mechanics and features made possible with the Wii U and the new controller."

Set in Arkham City, the maximum security prison for all of Gotham City's thugs, gangsters and insane criminal masterminds, the game features Catwoman, The Joker, The Riddler, Two-Face, Harley Quinn, The Penguin, Mr. Freeze and more of Gotham City's most dangerous criminals.

Features include: a Battle Armored Tech Mode (B.A.T. Mode) – A new upgraded battle suit for both Batman and Catwoman; Wii U New Controller Functionality – the touch screen allows you to be The World's Greatest Detective with the newly designed, wrist-mounted Batcomputer that lets you select your gadget, track evidence, upgrade gear, set and detonate explosive gel, and more, all without ever leaving the game; Reimagined Gadgets – All gadgets have been reimagined to utilize the power of the new controller, for example, you can now use the new Sonar mode that enables Batman to quickly probe his surroundings to develop the tactics needed for success, then select, customize and equip your preferred gadget loadout, as well as access a real-time map of Gotham without ever leaving the action of the game. The game also features Batman: Arkham City Game of the Year Edition Content, i.e., all previously released downloadable content including Harley Quinn's Revenge Pack, Catwoman Pack, Nightwing Bundle Pack, Robin Bundle Pack, Challenge Map Pack and Arkham City Skins Pack. Developed by WB Games Montreal and scheduled for release Holiday 2012.

Details: Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, Inc., www.warnerbros.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Wii U. Teaches/Purpose: logic, reading. Entry date: 6/20/2012.

Cartoon Universe (www.cartoonuniverse.com)

This free-to-play, online multi-player game for children is set in the worlds of Looney Tunes and Scooby-Doo. It is currently in Beta form and requires downloading and installing the unity web engine player.

According to press materials, you can create and customize characters, play mini-games, collect outfits and items and unlock achievements with Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Scooby-Doo and others.

There will be two worlds to explore: The Looney Tunes and Scooby Doo! islands, both with arcade-style mini-games and puzzles; and a chat function.

The press materials also state that the ad-free game, free to play, and does not require any money to explore. You can choose to buy in-game items, such as clothing, temporary power-ups, and special mini-game items and unlock new adventure areas and episodes by using Toon Tokens, the currency players earn by playing mini-games. The game uses CRISP Thinking technology, which monitors chat. Visit www.cartoonuniverse.com.

Details: Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, Inc., www.warnerbros.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Internet Site, Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: language, logic, spatial relations. Entry date: 6/20/2012.





DanceDanceRevolution: Classroom Edition

Turn an entire gym into a DDR event with this classroom edition of DanceDanceRevolution that lets you connect up to 48 DDR mat controllers to one Windows computer. Sold in units of 8, 24, 32, 40 or 48 sets, and ranging from \$5000 to \$16,000. The kit contains a set of "smart cards" that can be used to track BMI (Body Mass Index), calories and scores. The mats have wireless transmitters that communicate with a receiver on the PC, which stores the scores and progress. Information can be saved and shared online, for school contests. Get more information by sending an email message to ddrschool@konami.com.

Details: Konami, . Price: \$5000 and up. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Windows. Teaches/Purpose: physical education, gross motor coordination, dancing, rhythm, beat. Entry date: 6/12/2012.



Easy Bake Ultimate Oven

New this year from Hasbro -- a free app to go with your Easy Bake Oven. Called Easy Bake Treats (\$free) the app walks you through various recipes, one step at a time.

The new Easy Bake Ultimate Oven (\$50) comes with baking pan, cupcake pan, pan pusher, chocolate chip cookie mix, red velvet cake mix, pink frosting mix, rainbow sugar crystals package, paper cupcake wraps and instructions/recipe booklet.

You can follow the directions to bake cakes, cookies and cupcakes without the light bulbs used in the older ovens. This oven is electronic and uses "technology similar to a convection oven." See CTR Toyfair preview at <http://youtu.be/2OQ770njX04>

Details: Hasbro, Inc., www.hasbro.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Smart Toy, iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: baking, following directions. Entry date: 5/30/2012.



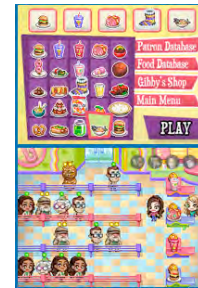
iCarly: Groovy Foodie!

Based on the Nickelodeon Show this is a puzzle game, specifically for the Nintendo DS.

In the story, Carly and Sam get into trouble and must complete community service by serving their food creations to crazy customers. These include Donuts on a Stick and Spaghetti Tacos.

You can play as either Carly or Sam, and interact with the show's cast members including Spencer. To score points, you must set your menu, prepare dishes, and serve them quickly while surrounded by quirky customers who include students or senior citizens at the Ridgeway Junior High café. Developed by WayForward for D3 Publisher.

Details: D3Publisher of America, Inc., www.d3publisher.us. Price: \$30. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: music, rhythm. Entry date: 6/22/2012.



InnoTab 2s Learning App Tablet

InnoTab 2s Learning App Tablet (InnoTab 2s) is the same as the InnoTab 2, with the addition of Wi-Fi. The idea is to offer a secure Wi-Fi pipeline so a child can easily download new content from VTech's own store.

Once users have downloaded a new app from the Learning Lodge Navigator, they can seamlessly sync the program to their InnoTab 2s wirelessly - no cord is needed - when they are in a Wi-Fi hotspot location.

The InnoTab 2s will be available this holiday season at Target, Wal-Mart, Toys R Us, all other major retailers and at www.VTechKids.com for a suggested retail price of \$99.99.

Details: VTech Electronics North America, www.vtechkids.com. Price: \$100. Ages: 3-9. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: early learning. Entry date: 6/12/2012.

Just Dance 4

This latest edition of Just Dance includes 40 new songs, plus additional dance moves designed to keep you moving. New modes include a Battle mode and an upgraded Just Sweat mode; plus more alternative dances.

Coming October 2012 for PS3, Xbox 360 with Kinect, and Nintendo Wii (\$40) and for Wii U at launch (\$50). The Wii U has a special DJ mode that lets one of the players plan the dancing sequences. Developed by Ubisoft Paris and Bucharest Reflections.

Details: Ubisoft, Inc., . Price: \$40. Ages: 10-up. Platform: PlayStation 3, Wii, Wii U, Xbox Kinect. Teaches/Purpose: dancing, music, rhythm. Entry date: 6/13/2012.





Just Dance Disney Party

Dance along to 25 songs adapted from both Disney Channel shows and Movie Classics. The choreography has been adapted to be child friendly so children can dance with friends.

Details: Ubisoft, Inc., www.ubisoft.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Xbox 360, Wii. Teaches/Purpose: gross motor coordination, movement, rhythm. Entry date: 6/13/2012.



Kingdom Hearts 3D Dream Drop Distance

Kingdom Hearts 3D, for the Nintendo 3DS, features a cast of Disney characters who make their 3D debut.

In the game, King Mickey and Yen Sid prepare for an impending threat by putting Sora and Riku through the Mark of Mastery exam. They are sent into the Sleeping Worlds, where they face new enemies and make friends. Features include the ability to swap between Sora and Riku (the two main characters). A new "Flowmotion Action" makes it possible to move while performing acrobatic attacks. Content includes new creatures and new Disney worlds; and 50 types of spirits as allies to fight alongside Sora and Riku.

Details: Square Enix, Inc., www.square-enix.com/na/. Price: \$40. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 6/21/2012.



MLB 12 The Show

Now that baseball season is in full swing, this year's edition of MLB is a nice addition to your library. Available for both the PS3 and PS Vita, MLB The Show features all the core modes including Exhibition, Season, Franchise, Home Run Derby, online play, and Road to The Show. PS Vita users will be able to use the new touch screen controls within the game, for example, front touch screen and rear touch screen to throw the ball to specific locations, make pitch commands, and run the bases. Players can also share save files between PS3 and PS Vita, and take their Franchise, Season, and Road to The Show save files up to the cloud where they can then access those files on either platform (limited to one file per mode per PlayStation Network account, which can be overwritten). The PS3 version supports the PS Move motion controller, allowing users to control all aspects of their game including pitching, hitting, fielding and running the bases. Other features include: Zone Analog Batting which allows you to use the right analog stick for the stride and swing, but if you choose you can use the left analog stick to control where you swing in the zone; Pulse Pitching which allows you to still pitch using an "X" button press, but you must time the press with an on-screen display to ensure pitch accuracy; Situational Collision Awareness; new Tag Animation System; and new Tutorial Moves. Prices are \$40 for the PS Vita version and \$60 for the PS3.

Details: Sony Computer Entertainment America, Inc., www.scea.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 8-up. Platform: PlayStation 3, Vita. Teaches/Purpose: sports, baseball. Entry date: 3/21/2012.



Motion Math: Hungry Guppy

This prequel to Motion Math: Hungry Fish starts with dot visuals (sets) and slowly moves into numbers, adding and subtracting by pinching the two numerals together. The mix of dots and numbers shows children "as young as two" how math works.

Details: Motion Math, . Price: . Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: numbers, addition, subtraction. Entry date: 6/13/2012.





My A-Z

This app lets you and your child create and personalize their own alphabet flashcards. For example, you can take a photo of your dog, record its bark, and create a flashcard for the letter D. Or, photograph and record Grandma for letter G. You can also create flashcards to aid in teaching another language, such as adding another dog photo under P and recording your child saying "Perro" (dog in Spanish). The app also includes a basic set of words and pictures, from Apple to Zipper. To add your own cards, click on the plus symbol to pull up the camera. Then, choose a picture from your photo library, or take a new one. Next, click on the microphone to record your voice, or sounds from your environment.

Details: Night & Day Studios, www.nightanddaystudios.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: alphabet. Entry date: 3/28/2012.



NHL 13

Virtual hockey sims are getting smarter, with this year's edition of NHL hockey.

New features include "True Performance Skating" which is supported by a new A.I. system called EA SPORTS Hockey I.Q. which together act to "accurately capture the speed, creativity and strategy of NHL hockey."

Other features include a social play option that lets you play with friends online (who also own a copy of the game), NHL Moments Live (rewrite or relive history as you replay famous hockey highlights), and the ability to create your own NHL dream team. This title will launch at the start of the hockey season.

Details: EA Sports - Electronic Arts Canada, . Price: \$call. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Xbox 360, PlayStation 3. Teaches/Purpose: sports, hockey. Entry date: 6/21/2012.



Nickelodeon Dance 2

The sequel to Nickelodeon Dance (CTR January 2012), this game lets children dance, sing and workout with new Nick characters.

According to press materials, there are new game modes, original dances, and songs from the related TV shows. Content includes 20 Nickelodeon characters from Bubble Guppies and team Umizoomi, plus old favorites including Dora the Explorer with thirty all-new tracks .

Other new features include a Freeze Dance mode, Workout section, and multi-player capability. Developed by High Voltage Software. Coming November 2012.

Details: 2K Play, www.2kgames.com/2kplay/. Price: \$call. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Xbox Kinect, Wii. Teaches/Purpose: dancing, gross motor coordination. Entry date: 6/20/2012.

Scribblenauts Unlimited

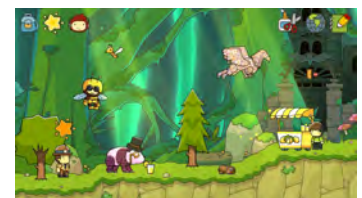
Coming Fall 2012 to the Nintendo 3DS, and for the first time to the big screen on Wii U, this edition of Scribblenauts contains more new words and related images, plus information about the game's hero, Maxwell, who solves puzzles and challenges by summoning any object that can be imagined. Children can also learn about Maxwell's parents, his twin sister Lily, and how he got his magical notepad.

The Wii U version, which we tried at E3 2012, lets you create your own original objects, assign properties, and share them with other players online, to be used in the game and/or modified. It uses the Wii U controller as a keyboard or sketchpad. There's also a multiplayer mode and drop in and play with a friend using a Wii Remote and take control of any object in game. Content includes an open universe with 41 levels plus object creation and the ability to share with the Wii U version.

The Nintendo 3DS version uses the Street Pass functionality to see all of the creative solutions to puzzles used by other players.

The object library lets you store old objects. Developed by 5TH Cell for Warner Bros. and scheduled for release Holiday 2012. See the demo at http://youtu.be/kHWVmF_Rajg.

Details: Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, Inc., www.warnerbros.com. Price: \$60. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Wii U, Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: language, creativity. Entry date: 6/20/2012.





Skylanders Giants

Coming this fall: sixteen Skylander characters that are twice the size of the previous Skylanders and can work with the related Spyro video game and "Portal of Power" peripheral (a light-up stage that acts like an additional game controller). The Portal is required in order to get the figure into your game.

The new Skylanders also light-up in the game and in the real-world and no batteries are required. Additionally, the game features new Hero Challenges, more Battle Mode gameplay, and advanced integration across console and mobile.

These are known as "Series 2" Skylanders that have "Wow Pow" upgrade power and the choice of more than one upgrade path. All Skylanders characters are compatible with Skylanders Giants, which also promises "all new arenas and additional gameplay options in Battle Mode for head-to-head play." Skylanders Giants feature closer integration with Skylanders Universe - the online world that allows Portal Masters to greatly their Skylanders experience. The starter pack costs \$75, for Wii, Xbox 360, PS3, 3DS, which includes the portal, the game (disk or cartridge), one Giant, one new Skylander, one Series 2 Skylander, three trading cards, and a poster. The \$60 Portal Owners Pack (Wii, Xbox 360, PS3) includes the new game and one Giant. Sold alone, the plastic figurines cost between \$12 and \$15.

Details: Activision, Inc., www.activision.com. Price: \$75. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Wii, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360. Teaches/Purpose: collecting, logic. Entry date: 6/14/2012.



Sorcery

In this single player game the Nightmare Queen has broken the ancient pact with mankind and has threatened to cover the land in eternal night.

You play as the sorcerer's apprentice, mastering the arcane arts and fighting the foul creatures of the land.

Using the Playstation Move controller as your wand, you will cast spells, brew elixirs, solve puzzles and defeat the forces of darkness.

You can chain together basic spells into combos, freeze and shatter your enemies, electrocute them with lightning, or incinerate them in a firestorm. You will also collect magic items, learn new spells and concoct upgrade potions.

There are five realms to explore, each with different enemies and challenges.

Details: Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc., www.us.playstation.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 10-up. Platform: PlayStation 3, PlayStation Move. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 6/25/2012.



Star Trek

Play as Kirk and Spock for the first time ever, in co-op gameplay. The game is set after the events of the Star Trek (2009) reboot, and continues the journey with a new story, as follows:

It seems that the Gorn are determined to conquer the galaxy and return as re-imagined versions of the classic Trek villains, infecting their foes with venom that can poison, cause hallucinations and kill. That is, unless Spock and Kirk can intervene, by hijacking enemy battleships, jumping through zero G onto moving spaceships, and swimming through subterranean waterways. Developed by Digital Extremes for Namco Bandai, coming early 2013.

Details: Namco Bandai Games America Inc., . Price: \$call. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Windows. Teaches/Purpose: logic, star trek. Entry date: 6/15/2012.



Star Wars Folded Flyers

Star Wars Folded Flyers is an activity book with 30 paper starfighters that can be flown around the house.

The six starfighter designs (five of each) are made from full-color, custom-designed papers representing Star Wars galactic vehicle exteriors. The books come with 36 sheets of custom-designed paper, tape, and 6 foldable display strands. Written by Benjamin Harper and The Scientists of Klutz Labs, the book is available at www.klutz.com and www.thinkgeek.com.

Details: Think Geek, www.thinkgeek.com. Price: \$20. Ages: 8-up. Platform: creativity. Teaches/Purpose: origami, paper folding. Entry date: 5/15/2012.



Wii U

Here are some FAQs about the new Wii U game console from Nintendo, as of June 2012. Wii U isn't scheduled for release until this fall although many more details are known.

Wii U supports all current Wii controllers and input devices, including the Nunchuk controller, Classic Controller and the Wii Balance Board. The disk drive on the Wii U console will accept all older Wii titles, but some disks such as Wii U Panorama View and Nintendo Land will only run on the Wii U system.

This is Nintendo's first HD (1080p) system, although it will still support 720p, 480p and 480i formats. Like the newer PS3 and Xbox boxes, you can plug it into your large screen with a single HDMI cable, although older composite graphics are still supported.

The Wii U system will ship with a special controller, called the Wii U GamePad, that has a clear 6.2-inch single touch screen and rechargeable batteries. It resembles a squared off steering wheel, with a screen in the center. This controller is not a separate game system -- in other words, it won't work if you wander out of range of the Wii U game console.

The touch screen is like the screen you'll find on the lower part of any DS, only Kindle-sized (just over 6 inches, diagonal). It is controlled by pressure -- a DS-like stylus slips in the back, so it is single-touch -- not multi-touch, like the iPad. The controls are instantly familiar to anyone with prior time with a DS, Wii Remote or PS3, with two triggers for each hand and smooth analog controls for each thumb, called Circle Pads. It also has rechargeable batteries -- another first for Nintendo -- and a front-facing camera, so that another player in a remote location could see you. Other goodies include a built-in accelerometer and gyroscope, rumble feature, microphone and stereo speakers.

The Wii U console is powered by an IBM Power-based multi-core microprocessor. The graphics are handled by an AMD Radeon-based High Definition GPU. There are four USB 2.0 connector slots. Besides having a stash of internal flash memory for saving games, you can plug in an off the shelf SD memory card or your own external USB hard disk.

You can't dismiss the fact that the camera and screen on the new controller opens another new social pipeline into your living room, and the responsive touch screen expands the definition of "game console." You can sketch, steer your Jedi starfighter or put the controller on the floor to function as a virtual golf tee, all with the same device. Because it mirrors the big screen, another family member can change the channel, while you keep playing. The ultimate measure of success will be gauged by two very old constants -- how fun are the games, and how much will you pay?

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Wii. Teaches/Purpose: a game console from Nintendo. Entry date: 6/13/2011.

