



Children's TECHNOLOGY

www.childrenstech.com

Review™

July 2011

Volume 19, No. 7, Issue 136

In This Issue: 36 New Releases or Review

- 3D Coloring Book for Kids: Fantasy Girls
- BrainPOP Games
- Carnival Island
- DanceDanceRevolution Wii
- Disney Universe
- Everybody Dance
- EyePet & Friends
- Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters
- Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2
- Hildegard Sings
- Incredible Machine, The (for iPad)
- Jelly Car 3
- Kinect Disneyland Adventures
- Kinect Star Wars
- Kirby Mass Attack
- Legend of Zelda, The: Ocarina of Time 3D
- LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game
- Little Deviants
- Luigi's Mansion 2
- Measure Up
- Nickelodeon Dance
- Nickelodeon Nicktoons MLB
- Oh, the Things You Can Think!
- Phineas and Ferb: Across the Second Dimension
- PianoBall - Fun with Learning
- PlayStation Vita (PSVita)
- Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One
- Sesame Street: Once Upon a Monster
- Shape Builder — The Preschool Learning Game
- Sims 3 Pets, The
- Sims Social, The
- Toddler Sing & Learn 1.1
- Toshiba Thrive
- Truly Great Noodle, The
- uDraw GameTablet
- Wii U

LittleClickers.com: Pasta p. 4



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

Virtual Worlds Sliced and Diced by Scott Traylor Notes from E3 and NECC 2011

LittleClickers: Learn About Pasta



Toshiba Thrive, p 16



PlayStation Vita, p 14



Nintendo Wii U, p. 17



E3: Wii U, PlayStation Vita and Kinect

Bustling with gamers and overly enthusiastic Italian TV crews, this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) was a good one. Held each May in LA, the show has had both on and off years, and this year was definitely an "on." Besides the crowds and a lot of buzz around new children's Kinect titles (see **Sesame Street: Ready, Set, Grover!**) two important game platforms were announced. **Wii U**, which represents Nintendo's step into both HD and the "social cloud" (thanks to a camera and Wi-Fi link between the controller and the console) and the technology-packed handheld called **PlayStation Vita**; Sony's admission (finally) that the future really does lie in capacitive touch screens. My two favorite Vita titles to watch: **Little Big Planet**, and a collection of logic puzzles called **Little Deviants**.

NECC: A Race to the STEM Clouded Candy Bowl

White board-based instruction systems (with handheld polling devices), expensive, cloud-based curriculum with annual contracts, and some extremely interesting Android-based tablets were on display at this year's highly swagged National Educational Computing Conference (NECC).

Fortunately for me, the show was in Philadelphia so I could drop down for a day to walk the floor, have dinner with my friends from Computer Explorers and stroll past the real, non-virtual Liberty Bell.

It is easy to become both excited and cynical when you attend two technology shows (E3 and NECC) in the same month. Both deal with "E's" -- Entertainment and Education. So which show had the learning innovation? E3, by leaps and bounds. Case in point, Nintendo's **Measure Up** (<http://bit.ly/kqcTAb>). At NECC, educators were lined up with coupon books, trading time for the candy and T-shirts being tossed out as a reward for sitting through a sales pitch for a \$3000, soon-to-be obsolete interactive white board. How behavioral. Two highlights none-the-less: BrainPOPs new game section (www.brainpop.com/games) and the Toshiba Thrive tablet, the first generation, Google powered iPad competitors.



LittleClickers: Pasta

If you live in the US, you eat an average of 15 pounds of pasta every year. Macaroni really is as American as Yankee Doodle. Learn more on page 4.

Virtual Worlds Sliced 'n Diced

Which virtual worlds are getting the most traffic, and why? Have a look at page 5 for a preview of a study just completed by the all knowing, all seeing Scott Traylor of 360 KID. This article is important for two reasons. Besides providing a global perspective on the virtual world space, it is written by our first Contributor, as part of my effort to expand the voices in *Children's Technology Review*. If you'd like to write something and you can agree to our editorial guidelines, let me know.

Dust or Magic News

Save the date for Dust or Magic 11, to be held Nov. 6-8 in Lambertville New Jersey. On the agenda: Chip Donahue on "Erik Erikson in the Age of iPad." If you missed AppCamp, the videos are now live. See <http://bit.ly/mq9fww> or <http://dustormagic.wikispaces.com/AppCamp>.

July 2011

Volume 19, No. 7, Issue 136

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



EDITORIAL COORDINATOR
Lisa Della Fave (lisa@childrenstech.com)



OFFICE MANAGER
Megan Billitti (megan@childrenstech.com)

CONTRIBUTOR
Scott Traylor, 360KID

INTERNS Chris Dunn (reviews), Ben Kates (video)

ONE YEAR SUBSCRIPTIONS cost \$24/year, for 12 issues, \$108 for print & electronic issues including online database access. Issues are sent monthly. Send payment to *Children's Technology Review*™, 120 Main Street, Flemington, NJ 08822 or call 800-993-9499. Other subscription options are available, including Print, Electronic, Site Licenses and Top 100 reports. Visit www.childrenstech.com, or call to learn more.

PRODUCT SUBMISSIONS. Send two products, with release information to *Lisa DellaFave, Editorial Coordinator, 120 Main Street, Flemington, NJ 08822 (Phone: 908-284-0404)*

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

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

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 www.childrensoftware.com/disclaim.html.

Contents © 2011 by Active Learning Associates, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Your Subscription is Your Key to 9997 Archived Reviews

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

Directory Grouped by age



All Ages

Carnival Island, www.scea.com, 9
Kinect Disneyland Adventures, www.microsoft.com/games, 11
PlayStation Vita (PSVita), 14
Toshiba Thrive, www.toshiba.com, 16
Wii U, www.nintendo.com, 17

Babies & Toddlers

PianoBall - Fun with Learning, www.4baam.com, 8
Shape Builder — The Preschool Learning Game, www.touchscreenpreschoolgames.com, 8
Toddler Sing & Learn 1.1, www.kiboomu.com, 16

Preschool & Kindergarten

My Play Home, Bluefish, www.myplayhomeapp.com, 7
Nickelodeon Dance, www.2kgames.com/2kplay/, 13
Oh, the Thinks You Can Think!, www.oceanhousemedia.com, 7
Sesame Street: Once Upon a Monster, www.warnerbros.com, 15
Truly Great Noodle, The, www.gridsinteractive.com, 8

Early Elementary

EyePet & Friends, www.scea.com, 10
Little Deviants, www.scea.com, 13
Nickelodeon Nicktoons MLB, www.2kgames.com/2kplay/, 14
uDraw GameTablet, www.thq.com, 17

Upper Elementary

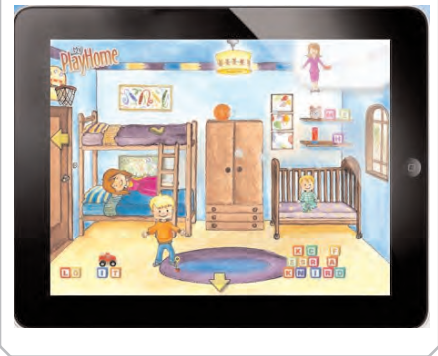
3D Coloring Book for Kids: Fantasy Girls, <http://comboapp.com/>, 6
BrainPOP Games, www.brainpop.com, 9
Disney Universe, www.disneyinteractivestudios.com, 9
Hildegard Sings, www.onehundredrobots.com, 6
Incredible Machine, The (for iPad), www.disneyinteractivestudios.com, 11
Jelly Car 3, www.disneyinteractivestudios.com, 11
Kirby Mass Attack, www.nintendo.com, 12
Legend of Zelda, The: Ocarina of Time 3D, www.nintendo.com, 7
Luigi's Mansion 2, www.nintendo.com, 13
Measure Up, www.nintendo.com, 13
Phineas and Ferb: Across the Second Dimension, www.disneyinteractivestudios.com, 14

Middle School

DanceDanceRevolution Wii, www.konami.com, 9
Everybody Dance, www.scea.com, 10
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters, www.warnerbros.com, 10
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2, www.ea.com, 11
Kinect Star Wars, www.microsoft.com/games, 12
LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game, www.disneyinteractivestudios.com, 12
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One, www.scea.com, 15
Sims 3 Pets, The, www.thesims.ea.com, 15
Sims Social, The, www.thesims.ea.com, 15

CTR Editor's Choice Selections, June 2011

Products that scored 4.4 or higher on the rating instrument.
Hildegard Sings, www.onehundredrobots.com
Legend of Zelda, The: Ocarina of Time 3D, www.nintendo.com
My PlayHome, www.myplayhomeapp.com
Oh, the Thinks You Can Think!, www.oceanhousemedia.com
Shape Builder — The Preschool Learning Game, www.touchscreenpreschoolgames.com
uDraw GameTablet, www.thq.com



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



Acknowledgments

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



Jenna Buckleitner, 16; Chris Dunne, 18; Daniel Della Fave, 11; Nick Della Fave, 15; Sam Coggins, 19; Kelly H., 11; Thomas H., 14; Mohamed (Mo) Farid, 16; Caleb, H. 10; Ethan H., 12; Tyler Griffith, 17; Troy Griffith, 14; Brett Griffith, 10; Michael Harrington, 14; Laura Henry, 14; Ellie Hilgen, 7; Erin Hilgen, 15; Ben Kates, 16; Matthew Kursa, 10; Frank Mondella, 13; Matthew Mondella, 10; Alyssa Mondella, 15; Keith Paternoster, 15; Greg Shriener, 26; Matt Ivans, 23; Alese Maniragaba, 13 and the Serious Game Testers (SGTC) club that meets at Mediatech on Fridays.

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

Internet sites and videos to help you learn about

PASTA

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

Visit **Computer Explorers** at www.computerexplorers.com with links for parents, principals and administrators. 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).

Macaroni and cheese, lasagna, spaghetti and Ramen noodles are all different forms of pasta. Where did pasta come from and how is it made? Let's go online and learn some more about pasta!

1. Which US President (who was also a founding father) loved Macaroni and Cheese? Hint: He even served it in the Whitehouse!

At Monticello.org, <http://bit.ly/cSvj6i> you learn that Thomas Jefferson was interested in macaroni. He sketched out a design for a macaroni machine, and served macaroni and cheese to White House Visitors in 1802.



2. Who eats more pasta, people in Italy or the USA?

According to the National Pasta Association, at <http://www.ilovepasta.org/funfacts.html> the Italians rule on this issue. The average Italian eats 51 pounds of pasta per year, compared to 15 pounds for people in the United States.

3. How many pasta shapes are there?

More than 600. This leads to the question, can you tell a Tortellini from a Tortelloni? Try the quiz at Purpose Games, <http://bit.ly/mO2SYh> or the harder test at the Good Food Channel <http://bit.ly/kIwdqs>. At Fine Cooking.com <http://bit.ly/huGKGe> you can learn which type of sauce works best with each type of noodle.



4. What year was the instant noodle (also called Ramen) invented? In which country?

At MIT's Inventor of the Week site, at <http://web.mit.edu/invent/iow/ando.html> you can learn the rags to riches story of Momofuku Ando who invented a fast way to cook pasta. He called it the Ramen Noodle, and he became very rich.



5. In which country was the world's oldest noodle discovered? In what year?

According to the BBC News, at <http://bbc.in/aklhZx>, the world's oldest noodle came from China. It was discovered over 4000 years ago.



Application

For instructions on how to dye pasta with rubbing alcohol: <http://bit.ly/mmWbIh>
To make pasta jewelry: <http://www.kid-craft-project.com/2009/08/pasta-jewelry/>
Read "Cloudy With A Chance of Meatballs" and then make some Spaghetti Art, following the instructions at Family Fun <http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/pasta-art-663132/>

Help, this column made me hungry!

Try some of the New York Times pasta recipes: <http://nyti.ms/kBxhCh>
(Disclosure, Warren Buckleitner is a NYTimes.com technology contributor).



LittleClickers YouTube Playlist: Pasta

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL930B69A41DEDF5A>



Pasta Crafts from Parents.tv



The Art of Noodle Making Part 1



Making Pasta in Florence



Macaroni and Cheese Recipe - Tom Jefferson's Mac



Pasta: Past and Present



how to make homemade pasta



Longest Campbell Noodle

See this page online, at <http://www.LittleClickers.com/lcpasta711.html>

Children's Virtual Worlds — Sliced and Diced

By Scott Traylor

It's been amazing to watch the virtual world (VW) space grow by leaps and bounds over such a short time. Using unique user traffic as a yardstick, the virtual world and massively multiplayer online (MMO) space increased more than 50% last year. Compare that with 15% for the prior year (in the US). The first thing to note is that traffic patterns seem to follow a seasonal rise and fall. Traffic increases from spring to early summer only to drop significantly when school starts in September. Then, as the holiday season approaches, it peaks before dropping off again in the new year.



WHAT'S HOT? The most popular destinations for both kids and adults are "casual gaming" destinations. For kids and tweens, that means **Wizard 101**, **Poptropica**, **Club Penguin** and **Moshi Monsters** (which was just valued at \$200 million). While social and chat-based destinations like **IMVU** and **Hi5** fall in second place for the young adult and older crowd, destinations that have a toy tie-in or real world connection, like **Webkinz** and **Build-A-Bearville** hold second place for kids and tweens. However, this VW/MMO type has been on a slow two-year decline, largely as a result of **Webkinz** losing significant marketshare over that period, to newcomers like **Wizard 101** and **Poptropica**. While **Club Penguin** has dropped in placement on the best top 10 list for kids, it has done a surprisingly good job of maintaining marketshare, losing only a small percentage compared to **Webkinz**.

Two destinations have really taken off. **Minecraft**, a "better than LEGO Universe" online building (or "crafting") world that appeals to both boys and girls is growing at an amazing rate globally. The funny thing about **Minecraft** is that it is still in public Beta! It's not even a fully released product yet. (Note to execs, learn from this product's creative expression thinking AND business model!) If you are not yet familiar with this low res, yesteryear looking world, tonight's homework is to get familiar with it, NOW (at <http://www.minecraft.net>). Educators should note that teachers are beginning to create lesson plans around **Minecraft's** in-world building activities. The second destination of note is Nickelodeon's latest virtual world offering, **Monkey Quest**. This new 3D world is also growing quickly since its launch earlier this year and you can't miss the advertising on Nickelodeon cable channels throughout the day. It's a world that spent more than a couple of years in development and the polish shows now that it's ready for prime time.



TOP 20 KID AND TWEEN VIRTUAL WORLD DESTINATIONS BY UNIQUE TRAFFIC	
1	Wizard 101
2	Poptropica
3	Webkinz
4	Club Penguin
5	Fantage
6	Moshi Monsters
7	MineCraft
8	Monkey Quest
9	JumpStart
10	Neopets
11	ToonTown
12	Pixie Hollow
13	Roblox
14	PetPetPark
15	Build-A-Bearville
16	Ourworld
17	Clone Wars Adventures
18	Pirates of the Caribbean
19	Happy Meal
20	FreeRealms

Source: 360KID, Compete.com

As we head into the summer months, the kids VW/MMO industry typically assumes that as the dog days of summer drag on, kids will become bored and start to gravitate to virtual world activities from the indoor comfort of an air conditioned room. If you watch any amount of children's commercial television during the summer you can't help notice the number of virtual world advertisements. However, while it is unclear if subscription rates actually rise during the summer months, unique traffic to kids VW/MMOs actually falls through July and August, especially in the casual gaming sector and in the toy and web connect space, an interesting trend that goes against popular belief.

What about education-based destinations? You might imagine these kind of sites have some appeal with younger audiences and kids, right? While the casual gaming space has captured almost 34% of all VW/MMO traffic, educational destinations hold less than 6% for all ages, and only 4.4% of all traffic for the top 20 kid and tween educational destinations. Out of this list, a majority share of traffic goes to Knowledge Adventure's **Jumpstart** and their new and fast growing world **Math Blaster**. Almost all other destinations show small numbers in comparison.

As I look back on the virtual world and MMO data I have collected over the past five years one thing is certain; expect to see many more virtual worlds launching in the months and years ahead. I remember a few years ago hearing one day there will be over 300 virtual worlds globally. I remember thinking "that's impossible, we will never have that many." Well, that day has recently come and gone. I continue to add another ten destinations to my list every month. Adding more new worlds to the existing list of players will create challenges for everyone in this field, pushing all players to continually improve, build out, and try to hold onto market share. Ultimately it will be the children and their parents that will benefit. Each new world that launches raises the bar for quality, engagement, innovation bar and ultimately, access. That's the good for kids, but it presents an ongoing challenge for publishers who choose to play in the virtual space.

Scott Traylor is the founder and Chief Kid of 360KID, a youth focused business that consults in the kids digital world as well as develops successful consumer and classroom products for its clients. If you're interested in learning more about Scott's recent virtual world research, you can purchase an expanded report by emailing him at scott@360kid.com.



Feature Reviews

JULY 1, 2011

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

3D Coloring Book for Kids: Fantasy Girls

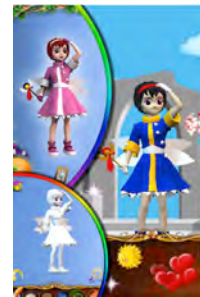
Girls, are you tired of coloring in princesses and puppies? Here's a new twist: this app lets you color in three dimensional outlines of exotic girl characters that include angels, peasants, warriors or other "strong" characters.

As you touch areas of each character, you fill it in with color. You can also add stickers, such as floating balloons. Hues and shading effects are automatically added to create a 3D appearance, and your model can be turned for a 360 degree view. Actual creativity options are limited, and there are frequent suggestions to visit iTunes to download additional apps, with 3D versions of other items. It is possible to save finished art and undo/redo your work. Prices are \$1.99 for iPhone & iPod Touch and \$2.99 for iPad. Developed by Intersog Ltd. for ComboApp.

Details: ComboApp, <http://comboapp.com/>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 7-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, coloring, female self image. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.4 stars. Entry date: 2/9/2011. [WB]

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

68%



Hildegard Sings

Best for older children who are already reading, this well crafted original ebook consists of twenty eight watercolor screens set to classical music. The story, at a glance, is of Hildegard Rhineheffer, a hippo/waitress by day and a backup singer by night.

In the story, opera star Frau Hoopenholler has fallen ill, Hildegard has her big break, but suddenly loses her voice. Your job is to help Hildegard overcome her stage fright by feeding her, helping her try on silly hats, or popping bubbles in her bath.

The interactive features work well to support the story, and each is easy to find and figure out. As a result, children will enjoy flipping through the story, making things happen.

While there is a "read to me" mode, the text is not highlighted, and there are no text to speech features. It is easy to jump to any page at any time, and the music and sounds can be toggled on or off.

Extras include play card spoofs on Madame Butterfly, Hansel and Gretel and a matching game (a game of concentration) of details from the illustrations. The story was written and illustrated by Thomas Wharton, the read to me mode is narrated by Tracie Higgins and Craig Schumacher.

The bottom line? If you like the story (which you probably will), you'll like this app.

Details: One Hundred Robots, www.onehundredrobots.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPhone 4, iPod Touch, or iPad (iOS 4 or later, 80 MB). Teaches/Purpose: reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 6/24/2011. [WB]

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

90%





Legend of Zelda, The: Ocarina of Time 3D

If you've played previous versions of Zelda, you're in for few surprises in this 3D version, according to our well-Zeldafied testers, besides some nice 3D frosting and a few games that use the cameras.

If you've never played a Zelda title, this is a great choice. The streamlined touch-screen interface and new motion controls are designed to give the game a more intuitive feel. There is also a new hint system to help novice players.

The game retains the analog control of the original version of the game via the Circle Pad, but players can also use motion controls by moving the Nintendo 3DS system to aim their slingshot or bow at an enemy with speed and accuracy. When you finish the main story you can look forward to the Master Quest, a second quest with harder puzzles that is unlocked. You can get hints by visiting the Skeikah Stone. The bottom line? This game will satisfy your hunger for a good adventure game, providing you haven't already played older versions.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic, spatal relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 6/14/2011. [WB]

My PlayHome

Convert your iPad into a four room playhouse where just about anything can be moved around and re-arranged. The result is an open-ended play experience.

There are four rooms: a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living room. For example, to serve dinner in the kitchen, you open (or close) drawers by touching them where you find food and/or dishes. You can drag and drop items on the table, and move the five members of the family (depicted traditionally, all Caucasian) around the table. If you put food near a mouth, you hear munching (or slurping, if it is a drink). Putting a pan on the stove will start an egg frying. After dinner, you can put the dishes in the dishwasher, and then move to the living room to turn on some music (just drag a CD to the stereo).

Because this is an open ended play experience, just about anything can happen. We managed to fit the entire family into the shower, for example, and get them all wet, fully dressed). There are no worrisome content, in-app sales or external links. All in all, this is a well designed, open ended play experience.

Details: Bluefish, www.myplayhomeapp.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: creativity. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 6/14/2011. [WB]

Oh, the Thinks You Can Think!

As with other Oceanhouse Media titles, Oh, the Thinks You Can Think! is based on an existing print Dr. Seuss book.

But, for the first time in Oceanhouse history, this title offers a new interactive feature. For the first time, you can "build" each page by touching one of the floating question marks that appear in the white sections of the screen. After each page is created (typically taking about 5 taps), you can see the items labeled both in print and with clear speech, in typical Oceanhouse fashion. Because there are extra steps, the "read it myself" mode can take some time to work through. It isn't possible to jump around in the story, a feature that would be nice given the spoon-fed design technique. Narrated by Karen Kripalani.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$4. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: language, logic, thinking. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 6/22/2011. [WB]

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



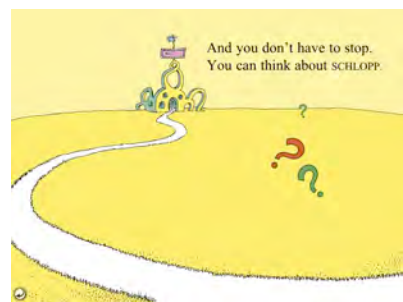
ESRB Rating: Everyone 10+



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



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





PianoBall - Fun with Learning

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

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

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



Shape Builder -- The Preschool Learning Game

Easy to pick up and play, and full of educational potential related to spatial thinking, Shape Builder turns your iPod Touch or iPhone into a self-correcting set of 146 jigsaw puzzles.

Now available in both English or Spanish and also for Android devices, the app makes it easy to drag-and-drop pieces into place to make common objects, like musical instruments, dishes, animals, and vehicles. The responsive design makes it very easy for children to use trial and error to complete the puzzles, and the pieces snap into place.

The app runs on iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad, Android, and Bada devices. Narration is provided by speech therapist Jill Dews. Content includes 30 Musical instruments with sound effects, 17 Fruits & Vegetables, 37 Animals with sounds, 26 Letters that are sounded out, 20 Numbers and others. Random play resets after all puzzles are completed. Made by Darren Murtha and Chris Lott.

Details: Darren Murtha Design, www.touchscreenpreschoolgames.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 2-5. Platform: iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, Android. Teaches/Purpose: logic, spatial relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 6/15/2011. [WB]

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



Truly Great Noodle, The

Featuring an original story and music with hot spots, this story by Sam Berman and Bonnie Bright consists of 17 pages full of hidden animations. The graphics and narration style is similar to The Living Books (the 1990s releases by Broderbund).

In the story, Nate meets and tries to eat a never-ending noodle; an idea that will have instant appeal to any child who has ever tried a plate of spaghetti. The narration is presented in rhyme and the hot spots are comical, and, at times, rather unrelated to the story. Weaknesses to note might be an inability to toggle off the background music on each page. Some might find the frequent, authentic-sounding burps to be offensive.

It is possible to record your own narration, although getting it to play in the context of the story is tricky. Reading scaffolding includes highlighted text. It is not possible to touch individual words to hear them read out loud. Other features include: Nate's Burp-O-Meter (you can record your own burp and give it a name) and nine original songs including "The Truly Great Noodle."

As iPad-based ebooks go, this one is lacking in innovative features, but the story theme will appeal to some children.

Details: Grids Interactive, www.gridsinteractive.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 6/23/2011. [WB]

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





Future Releases

JULY 1, 2011

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

BrainPOP Games

At this year's NECC, a new "Serious Games" portal was announced at BrainPOP (www.brainpop.com/games).

There, you can download free versions of grant-funded games, like Sandra Day O'Conner's iCivics, GameStar Mechanic, or other titles from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, NobelPrize.org, Filament Games, the Michigan State University Gel Lab, Boston Children's Hospital Generation Cures, Scot Osterweil's Learning Games Network, the Space Science Institute's SciGames, and more. You certainly can't bicker about the price (free), and there's a side bar that provides news on new games.

Details: BrainPOP, LLC., www.brainpop.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: all school subjects including social studies, science, math, art, history. Entry date: 6/30/2011.



Carnival Island

Carnival Island lets you use the PlayStation Move controller (required) to toss, roll, throw, spin and slam your way through 35 multiplayer (up to four players) carnival games.

Games include minibowl, ring toss, throwdown and frogbog, and you earn tickets redeemable for prizes and collectibles. By completing challenges, you gradually wake up the carnival world, coloring in black and white scenes, which includes a cheering squad of pets and a more. You can also interact with fun house mirrors, photo cut-outs, and upload snapshots of your experiences to Facebook or send to PlayStation Network friends.

Developed by Magic Pixel Games, scheduled for release Holiday 2011.

Details: Sony Computer Entertainment America, www.scea.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 5-up. Platform: PlayStation 3 Move. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 6/9/2011.



DanceDanceRevolution Wii

This DanceDanceRevolution game for the Wii features traditional style Wii gameplay and more than 50 tracks to dance to, including: Bad Romance by Lady Gaga; Need You Now by Lady Antebellum; and I'm Yours by Jason Mraz. The Choreograph Style mode lets you dance with the model dancer on screen, using your whole body using the mat controller, Wii Remote, and Nunchuk. And the new Multi-player mode provides two separate dance sequences, and can be played with or without the mat controller, using just your upper body with the Wii Remote and Nunchuk. The game is also compatible with the Wii Balance Board. See also the PS3 and the XBox 360 version.

Details: Konami Digital Entertainment, Inc., www.konami.com. Price: \$60. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Wii. Teaches/Purpose: dance, rhythm, gross motor coordination for both upper and lower body. Entry date: 12/15/2010.

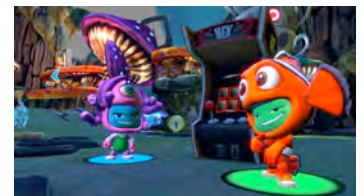


Disney Universe

Disney Universe is a fast-paced one to four player action adventure game set in a mashup of Disney-related worlds and characters. For example, you can play with Buzz Lightyear to solve puzzles and save the universe. The 40 characters include Alice ("Alice in Wonderland"), Mike ("Monsters, Inc."), TRON ("TRON: Legacy") and Stitch ("Lilo & Stitch"). There are six worlds, each with a different objective. Learn more at <http://www.disneyinteractivestudios.com>.

Made by Eurocom for Disney.

Details: Disney Interactive Studios, www.disneyinteractivestudios.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 8-12. Platform: PlayStation 3, Wii, Xbox 360, Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: logic and problem solving. Entry date: 6/29/2011.



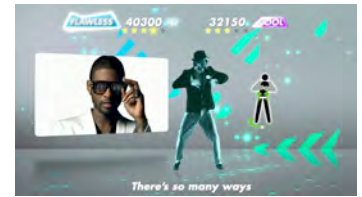


Everybody Dance

Scheduled for release Fall 2011 for the PlayStation Move, this dance game features 40 party hits including Usher's OMG, Party Rock Anthem by LMFAO and Barbra Streisand by Duck Sauce along, along with the original artist's music videos.

Using the PlayStation Move controller and PlayStation Eye camera to track and score moves, you can test your dancing skills with three difficulty levels, each featuring unique routines. You can also dance solo, team up with a friend for a cooperative Partner Routine, challenge a friend to a competitive Dance Battle, or use the Party Play mode where up to 20 players can go head-to-head in the ultimate dance-off. The game also features a Dance Class feature to improve your skills through routine breakdowns, a Dance Creator feature that lets you develop your own choreography, a Dance Workout that tracks your fitness progress and calories burned; and Sing-Along. You can also record your performances using the PlayStation eye camera, and share your moves with other dancers around the world by uploading your performances to everybodydancegame.com and sending links to their Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Details: Sony Computer Entertainment America, www.scea.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 7-up. Platform: PlayStation 3 Move. Teaches/Purpose: dance, rhythm. Entry date: 6/9/2011.



EyePet & Friends

This second EyePet title now features two pets and two controllers allowing you and a friend to play simultaneously with your virtual pets.

You can place an object in front of the camera and watch your pets interact accordingly. You can tickle them by waving your fingers in front of the camera, poke them to make them jump, or roll a ball and watch them chase it.

The new progression structure-rewards-based system lets you choose how you move through the game. Your pets will earn reward tokens for everything they do, and you can redeem these tokens for new content in the Pet Store.

Other features include creative customization features that let you create and modify your EyePet's clothing, toys, soft play themes, and other areas of the game, and a new EyePet online community-connect to community portal where you can review your own and friends' EyePet profiles, participate in events and competitions, and view and share content with friends. Developed by London Studio and scheduled for release November 2011.

Details: Sony Computer Entertainment America, www.scea.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 3-up. Platform: PlayStation Move, PlayStation 3. Teaches/Purpose: a pet simulation, problem solving. Entry date: 6/10/2011.



Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters

Inspired by the film Green Lantern, this game puts you in the world of pilot Hal Jordan, the first human Green Lantern, who is on a battle to restore intergalactic order.

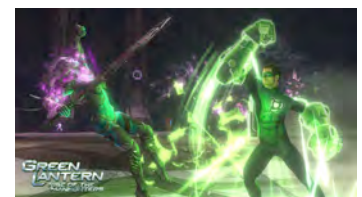
The battles involve a set of weapons that includes a gatling gun and the giant fist. The weapons can be chained together to form killing combinations (shh, don't tell the kids that this is also called programming).

The goal is to build an array of weapons to defeat the evil android race, the Manhunters.

There's a lot of 3D in this game. The Nintendo 3DS version has special capabilities; the console versions require special hardware or 3D glasses (active shutter glasses that are compatible with the television). The PS3 and Xbox 360 versions allow you to team up and battle the Manhunters in drop-in/drop-out local co-op gameplay as Hal Jordan or Sinestro.

Developed by Double Helix Games for Xbox 360 and PS3, and by Griptonite Games for Wii, Nintendo DS and Nintendo 3DS. Note: Wii, DS and 3DS versions are rated E10+ for Fantasy Violence.

Details: Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, Inc., www.warnerbros.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 12-up. Platform: PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Wii, Nintendo DS, Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 6/29/2011.





Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2

If you liked last year's Deathly Hallows (Part 1) you're supposed to like this one more. Why? Besides being set in Hogwarts castle, "you can change between eight key characters on the fly, and more easily swap between spells in real time," according to Pete Smith, the Executive Producer of EA's Bright Light Studios. I had a preview, and can attest to the fact that this is a more fluid, visceral experience, for better or for worse depending on how you feel about violence. Content includes 12 levels of shooting, blowing things up and freezing bad guys, in this case, members of Lord Voldemort's army. If all goes well you save the day and Voldemort's rule ends, just like the movie.

Besides all the fighting, you must plant carefully timed explosions, and find your way through the maze-like chamber of secrets, so there is a good deal of logic and problem solving, intermixed with the very high body count.

The aesthetics of this HD title are notable, with full orchestration and dark shading. Enhanced features work with Sony Move, but there is no Kinect support. If you're looking for some fast paced Harry Potter adventure, this is a good option.

Details: Electronic Arts, Inc., www.ea.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Windows, PlayStation 3, PlayStation Move, Wii, Xbox 360. Teaches/Purpose: logic, problem solving. Entry date: 6/8/2011.



Incredible Machine, The (for iPad)

Originally released on the PC in 1993, this modernized edition lets you accomplish objectives, like get a ball through a hoop. Content includes 60 levels, with 90 items to mix and match. Additional items and puzzle packs will be sold. Multiplayer options are available through the Game Center. Created by Disney Mobile.

Details: Disney Interactive Studios, www.disneyinteractivestudios.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 6/29/2011.



Jelly Car 3

This third version of Jelly Car has new levels and video replays of levels. It is the first to run on Android (versions also work with iPad). Content includes 50 themed courses, each with platforms and objects that move, rotate and trigger special effects. The goal is to race to the stop sign and keep an eye out for secret exits.

Now you can create a customized color-styled JellyCar. Other new features include Ghost Car racing (race against friends and share best times from the global leader boards); time rewind (go back in time and Rewind a level) and more.

Details: Disney Interactive Studios, www.disneyinteractivestudios.com. Price: \$.99. Ages: 7-up. Platform: iPad, Android, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: logic, creativity, physics. Entry date: 6/29/2011.



Kinect Disneyland Adventures

Designed for one or two players, this Kinect experience lets you explore a photo-realistic version of Disneyland on your TV screen, using your body motions and voice as the controller.

Each activity has you moving in a different way. You can fly through Neverland with Peter Pan, with your arms extended like wings, challenge Captain Hook to a sword fight or explore Alice in Wonderland with a friend. While in the park, you can hug or high-five the characters and collect autographs.

The more you play and explore, the more Disney-themed items you can collect. Other rewards include virtual parades and fireworks. A helper mode lets a second player or parent jump in to assist on difficult challenges. The game adjusts difficulty based on skill, allowing players of all ages to participate. Developed by Frontier Developments Ltd. (the same studio that made Kinectimals) for Microsoft. Coming Holiday 2011.

Details: Microsoft Game Studios, www.microsoft.com/games. Price: \$call. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Xbox Kinect. Teaches/Purpose: gross motor coordination, rhythm, Disney. Entry date: 6/6/2011.





Kinect Star Wars

If you've ever played a Kinect game, you know that the idea of lightsaber fighting using the controller-free Kinect camera is a great match.

Featuring quality graphics, Kinect Star Wars lets you physically experience training as a Jedi, using the Force and battling with full body motions.

Note that there's a lot of moving in this game, so make sure you have an open space.

Besides the lightsaber fighting, you can fly ships, or steer a Pod racer in a race. There are both co-op, competitive and duel modes, making it easy for a second player to jump in and out.

Created by LucasArts and Terminal Reality; published by Microsoft Studios.

Details: Microsoft Game Studios, www.microsoft.com/games. Price: \$call. Ages: 12-up.

Platform: Xbox Kinect. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 6/30/2011.



Kirby Mass Attack

Coming "September, 2011", Kirby is split into 10 pieces by an evildoer with a magic cane. You use the stylus on the DS touch screen to control a group of Kirby characters (up to 10) as they set off on a journey to return to their original form.

The number of Kirby characters you control is important, because some challenges require a specific number of Kirbys in order to be solved. When the number of Kirby characters is increased, you can gain the upper hand. You can control each Kirby in a variety of ways, for example, a Kirby character can be launched into the air with a flick of the stylus, or you can make a swarm of Kirby characters dash to a given point by tapping on that spot on the touch screen multiple times. You can also swipe the touch screen to launch them in a mass attack against enemies, then tap the enemies into submission. The goal is to collect medals hidden throughout the various stages and to unlock additional minigames. Developed by HAL Laboratory, Inc.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 6/15/2011.



LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game

For the first time, Pirates of the Caribbean meets LEGOs, in this upcoming TT game.

Content includes 70 movie characters from the fourth film, Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides. In the game, you explore 20 levels in two player Cooperative mode or Freeplay mode, which lets you return to levels to discover new treasures.

The Nintendo 3DS version has special features including the Pirate Duel mode which allows you to cross swords with nearby Nintendo 3DS owners using the StreetPass feature, which automatically detects and communicates with other Nintendo 3DS systems. When an encounter with another 3DS is initiated, Pirate Duel puts you in a battle where you can select from a series of attacks and blocks to be utilized by your LEGO pirates, earning Play Coins that unlock and let you use new characters.

Developed by TT Games. Prices are \$50 for the Wii, Xbox 360, and PS3, \$40 for Nintendo 3DS, and \$30 for the PSP, DS, and PC versions.

Details: Disney Interactive Studios, www.disneyinteractivestudios.com. Price: \$50.

Ages: 8-up. Platform: Wii, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, PSP, Nintendo DS, Nintendo 3DS, Windows. Teaches/Purpose: logical thinking, spatial relations. Entry date: 6/7/2011.





Little Deviants

Designed specifically around the unique attributes of the Sony Vita handheld game system (due this Fall from Sony), Little Deviants is a collection of thirty games that provide a good test of your problem solving abilities and reaction time.

In Hole Roll Control, you touch the back of the Vita (the back side has a sensitive, capacitive screen, like the iPad) to see the "bump" of your finger on a floating landscape. By moving the bump around, you push one of the deviants (they roll) toward a hole. It's as if you could reach underground, say, under a golf course, and push the ground up in order to move the ball. Other games include House of Whacks, Depth Charge, and Botz Blast -- the latter an augmented reality game that uses the outside-facing camera to let you target bad guys who are floating around the room. This game demonstrates that the Vita can act a lot like the Nintendo 3DS (see Face Raiders). According to Robert Shaer, one of the game designers, "Little Deviants was built from the ground up to take advantage of the Vita." Coming Fall 2011.

Details: Sony Computer Entertainment America, www.scea.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Vita. Teaches/Purpose: logic, problem solving, fine motor control. Entry date: 6/29/2011.



Luigi's Mansion 2

Mario and Luigi meet the Ghost Busters, in this follow-up to the 2001 GameCube title, called Luigi's Mansion. It is a one player exploration game. As you move through the rooms of the mansion, you must suck up stubborn ghosts armed with your ghost-sucking vacuum cleaner.

There are a variety of ghosts, so problem solving is required. You can also use the Poltergust to help Luigi remove wallpaper to reveal hidden areas, clean up piles of treasure-hiding leaves or suck up stacks of coins and bills. Scheduled for release 2012. (Note: the name is not final.)

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic, problem solving. Entry date: 6/13/2011.

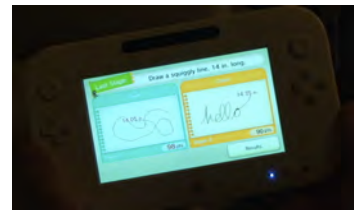


Measure Up

Can you draw a line that is exactly 1.5 inches long? How about a 55 degree angle?

Designed for one or two players who take turns with the Nintendo Wii U game controller, Measure Up is a math estimation game, that instantly evaluates your ability to guess angles. And it just might be the most innovative digital math curriculum product of the year. Why? Because it gives you instant, objective feedback on your attempt. After four tries, your score is added up; the player with the best accuracy wins the match.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Wii U. Teaches/Purpose: geometry, estimation, measurement. Entry date: 6/29/2011.



Nickelodeon Dance

Dance along with Nick characters Dora, Diego, and the Backyardigans with this sequel to last year's Nickelodeon Fit, for parents and children to play together. The Kinect version could be especially worth keeping an eye on. Coming Fall 2011.

Details: 2K Play, www.2kgames.com/2kplay/. Price: \$call. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Xbox Kinect, Wii. Teaches/Purpose: dancing, gross motor coordination. Entry date: 6/29/2011.



Nickelodeon Nicktoons MLB

This playful baseball simulation features a roster of Nickelodeon characters that take on professional players from 30 MLB teams.

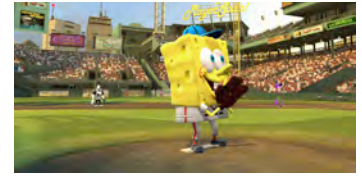
The Kinect version lets you bat and pitch with your hands, no controller needed, and a two player option lets you play against a friend.

The Nicktoons roster includes SpongeBob SquarePants, ZIM, Dudley Puppy, Fanboy, Chum Chum, and Ren and Stimpy. Major League players include Matt Holliday (St. Louis Cardinals), Andre Ethier (Los Angeles Dodgers), Miguel Cabrera (Detroit Tigers), Jason Heyward (Atlanta Braves), Cliff Lee (Philadelphia Phillies), and Robinson Cano (New York Yankees).

You can create your own ballpark, based on themes such as Fenway Park or the frigid Frosty Freeze Field.

Scheduled for release Summer 2011 and developed by High Voltage Software for Wii and Xbox 360 and by Black Lantern Studios for Nintendo DS.

Details: 2K Play, www.2kgames.com/2kplay/. Price: \$call. Ages: 5-8. Platform: Wii, Xbox 360, Xbox Kinect, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: sports, baseball. Entry date: 6/8/2011.



Phineas and Ferb: Across the Second Dimension

Inspired by the upcoming Disney Channel Original Movie, this game lets you play as one of eight characters including Phineas, Ferb, or Agent P as you overcome obstacles and use gadgets unique to each character to defeat enemies. You can also collect items, upgrade gadgets and unlock new playable characters while navigating 24 levels in seven worlds including gelatin, bouncy balloons, old-school cartoons and more. The game also features Platypus Day and Halloween themed environments, and drop in/drop out two player co-op play. Developed by High Impact Games and scheduled for release August 2, 2011.

Details: Disney Interactive Studios, www.disneyinteractivestudios.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 6-12. Platform: Wii, PlayStation 3, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: problem solving, socialization. Entry date: 6/7/2011.



PlayStation Vita (PSVita)

Sony's \$250 PlayStation Vita (PSVita), formerly called the NGP, was unveiled last month at E3 2011, for availability later in the year. When I first saw it, I thought I was looking at a shiny black, widebody PSP 3000 (the same form factor the first PSP), only with a significantly wider screen. In many ways that assessment is accurate. The controls are basically the same; with shoulder triggers and analog joysticks. But there are two major differences that are immediate the second you pick it up. First, it feels light in your hands, so light in fact that I immediately started wondering about battery life, an issue that killed the PSPgo. Second, you can't help but notice the clear, responsive multi-touch screen. Yes folks, Sony has discovered multi-touch, and this opens a new range of possibilities. The front screen is large (5 inch), clear and multi-touch. The surface on the back of the unit is also multi-touch.

So, for a game like ModNation Racers, you can mold the landscape with your fingers, pushing up from underneath to make mountains, or down on the the front screen to make valleys; a very cool new game play mechanic.

Ports and slots include a "Vita Card Slot" (details unknown), a memory card slot, plus a SIM card slot for the 3G model. The 3G service will be provided by AT&T. PSP Vita raises a lot of questions. In a device so light and so large, with so much electron-using surface, can you get a full day of gaming without a charge? Does it stand a chance in the age of the iPod Touch and Nintendo 3DS? And, if it does take off, will it launch a fashion craze for big pockets?

Details: Sony Computer America, Inc., . Price: \$250 (\$300 for 3G). Ages: 3-up. Platform: Vita. Teaches/Purpose: a new handheld game system from Sony. Entry date: 6/7/2011.





Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One

Great for small groups, this is a fighting/puzzle game. For the first time in the Ratchet & Clank series, this game features four player co-operative gameplay, allowing you to team up as Ratchet, Clank, Qwark and Dr. Nefarious. In the game, Dr. Nefarious' latest evil plan goes awry and both our heroes and villain are caught in the snare of a powerful machine and must work together to find a way to escape.

You can play alone or with up to three others as Ratchet, Clank, Qwark or Dr. Nefarious -- either online (remotely) or locally. Each player has a special set of unique skills as well as an arsenal of co-op weapons.

There is a 3D version. Developed by Insomniac Games. Scheduled for release Fall 2011.

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



Sesame Street: Once Upon a Monster

Coming this fall, a new direction for Sesame Street; the Xbox Kinect. According to advance press materials, children will be able to "join Cookie Monster, Elmo and other Sesame Street characters, and explore a living storybook titled Once Upon a Monster."

Children can become part of the adventure via the Kinect camera, and interact with the characters by dancing, jumping and flying. Created by Tim Schafer, President and CEO of Double Fine Productions for Sesame Workshop; published by Warner Bros.

Details: Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, Inc., www.warnerbros.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Xbox Kinect. Teaches/Purpose: classification. Entry date: 4/16/2011.



Sims 3 Pets, The

You've made the people. Now you can make their pets, with this new edition of the Sims that includes a set of pet creation tools. You can choose each animal's traits, and let them move into your Sims' homes where they have babies and help the Sims solve town mysteries.

Sims 3 Pets is available both as a standalone game for Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 or as an expansion pack for other platforms. The Kinect version uses voice commands, the PC/Mac version includes horses and the Nintendo 3DS version uses the pedometer to collect coins by taking walks. You can also trade pets with Nintendo StreetPass.

Note that an Internet connection and registration code are required for the PC/Mac version. Some features subject to availability through PlayStation Network and/or Xbox LIVE.

Details: Electronic Arts, www.ea.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 8-up. Platform: PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: creativity. Entry date: 6/8/2011.



Sims Social, The

Mix up your Facebook friends with your sims, with The Sims Social, coming Summer 2011. The package includes a companion app for smart phones. Learn more, on Facebook, naturally, at www.facebook.com/TheSimsSocial or on www.twitter.com/TheSimsSocial.

Created by Playfish studios (John Earner, General Manager).

Details: EA Play, . Price: \$call. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPhone, Android, iPad, Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: logic, creativity. Entry date: 6/6/2011.





Toddler Sing & Learn 1.1

Published 6/27/2011, Toddler Sing & Learn 1.1 for iPad is the second of 3 apps in a series of song, puzzle and coloring page titles.

Content includes 10 sing-along songs (by Wendy Wiseman, Sara Diamond and Christopher Pennington), 10 puzzles and 10 coloring pages covering words, letters, numbers, colors and shapes, body parts, food, days of the week, animal sounds and so on.

Songs include: Hello, Old MacDonald, Three Little Fishies, B-I-N-G-O, Apples and Bananas, The Ants Go Marching, Head & Shoulders, Colors, Shapes, On Top of My Pizza, 5 Little Monkeys, This is The Way We Go To School, The Wheels On The Bus, Alphabet Song, 6 Little Ducks, If You Know All The Seasons, Days Of The Week, and Goodbye. Other apps include Twinkle Twinkle Little Star Piano, Old MacDonald Piano and ABC Piano. Visit <http://www.kiboomu.com> for more information.

Details: Kiboomu Inc., www.kiboomu.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-4. Platform: iPad, iPod (42 MB). Teaches/Purpose: music. Entry date: 6/27/2011.



Toshiba Thrive

Note to Apple: your iPad has some competition, at least Toshiba (<http://www.thetoshibatablet.com>) hopes.

I've just played a round of Angry Birds on a production model of the "Thrive", formerly known as the "Toshiba Tablet", on display this week at the National Educational Computing Conference in Philadelphia, and in stores next month. Besides the less slippery screen (it is non-oleophobic) it is very easy to forget you're not playing on an iPad.

Besides costing \$70 less than the iPad (\$430 for the base model) it has some welcome features, namely USB, HDMI and SD card slots (no adapters, dongles or other plugs needed). This tablet is decidedly more laptop-ish than the iPad. You can snap off the back and put in a fresh, replaceable 7 hour battery, and it runs web-based content, Flash included.

Powered by an NVIDIA Tegra 21 CPU, running on Android 3.1 Honeycomb. The multi-touch widescreen looks good, and yes, it plays Angry Birds just fine.

Like the iPad, Thrive has both a gyroscope and accelerometer, two cameras (2 MP front and 5 MP back), stereo speakers and microphone, and a removable soft back cover that comes in five colors. The unit ships with wireless printer sharing and a suite of Google apps, including YouTube, Gmail, Google Maps, Music, Videos and of course the Android Market. Peripherals include two docking stations — the \$60 Multi-Dock, with additional ports for HDMI, two USB 2.0 ports and audio out, in case you want to use the Thrive as a replacement for your laptop. The \$40 Standard Dock has the audio out port; when docked you can access the built-in ports, or write emails and more using a Bluetooth keyboard (sold separately), while the tablet charges.

Prices start at \$430 for the 8GB model to \$580 for the 32GB models; Wi-Fi only at launch (possible data plans down the road, according to Toshiba).

Details: Toshiba, www.toshiba.com. Price: \$429. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Android. Teaches/Purpose: an Android based tablet. Entry date: 6/28/2011.





uDraw GameTablet

Update: PS3 and Xbox 360 versions have been announced (call for pricing and release date), with integrated motion detection.

The Wii version (CTR Sept 2010) uses the Wii Remote to detect the motion as long as it is snapped inside the uDraw GameTablet holder. Visit www.worldofudraw.com for more information.

The \$70 Wii-only tablet works with a specific drawing-based titles.

While I found the controls to be less-than-intuitive, older kid testers, aged 11 and 13, figured them out quickly, and were able to make some beautiful watercolor sketches, and replay them when using the included title, called uDraw Studio (to which the ratings apply).

If you're looking for the smooth glide of a Wacom tablet, you're likely to be disappointed. There's a slight lag between the dab of your stylus and what you see on your screen, and younger children will need help in order to toggle between the drawing tools palette and their sketch. Soon, you discover that as a drawing tool, uDraw has some real chops. There's an infinite number of colors that can be mixed or layered on a range of textured surfaces. You can replay your drawings as a slide show, erase, cut & paste, stamp and change for switching between, say, markers or charcoal.

Work can be saved, or exported to your Wii's SD card in JPG format, but unfortunately you can't import graphics. Sorry kids, no drawing mustaches on Grandma. Two additional games (E-rated) will be Dood's Big Adventure and Pictionary (\$30).

Details: THQ, Inc., www.thq.com. Price: \$70. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Wii, PS3 and Xbox 360. Teaches/Purpose: art, creativity, fine motor control. Entry date: 8/10/2010.



Wii U

Here are some FAQs about the new Wii U game console from Nintendo. The first thing to know is that Wii U is a completely new HD system that plays nicely with the prior system's controllers and software. Wii U isn't scheduled for release until sometime in 2012.

Wii U is backward compatible with existing Wii software, although there are future titles, including Super Smash Bros., that will only run on the Wii U system. Wii U also supports all current Wii controllers and input devices, including the Nunchuk controller, Classic Controller and the Wii Balance Board. 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 new Wii U system will ship with a special controller that 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 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.

Wii U 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 your 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 it 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. We're still a long way from shipping (next year), but the ultimate measure of success will be gauged to 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.

