

Apps for Kindergarten

by Warren Buckleitner

Last month a friend who is an elementary principal called me, and asked for a list of good apps to support the curriculum. I turned to our review database (you can too, at <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/ctrlogin.php>) to come up with this list of apps to support the curriculum. Here's some highlights from the list, hand picked from the 715 Kindergarten iPad apps we've reviewed to date. First some notes: This list is by no means comprehensive, and some are part of a series that we might have included to introduce you to a promising developer. The reviews are continually updated in the CTR Review Database.

Reading Skills

These self-correcting phonics games playfully deliver practice with skills needed to become a reader.

Endless Alphabet, \$free with ads (a premium, ad-free version is planned) by Callaway Digital Arts <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/endless-alphabet/id591626572?mt=8> shows children how the letters can be combined, in a jigsaw-like fashion -- to make words. When a letter is touched, it becomes animated and sounds itself out, linking word bits with meaning in a playful, child controlled way that makes this an extremely valuable early reading experience.

Kindergarten Reading, \$.99, by Duck Duck Moose Design <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/kindergarten-reading-hd-by/id573698255?mt=8> contains nine fast-paced early reading activities that do an excellent job introducing and reinforcing the first sight words, like dog, cat and zoo. The result is an excellent early reading skills activity; for home or classroom use. The app introduces letter sounds for all consonants, short vowels, long vowels and consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words. It also tracks children's progress.

PlaySquare: WordWorld's Happy Birthday Dog!, \$free, by PlaySquare, LLC <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/playsquare-presents-wordworlds/id536304087?mt=8> bills itself as "touchable television," letting children discover 25 common words. It mixes interactive play with TV-quality video. The result is a solid language experience, with a chance to play with letters and words to apply some of the concepts. Note that this can be a noisy app (like TV) perhaps making it better suited for home rather than classroom use. For ages 3-6.

Word Wagon, \$1.99, by Duck Duck Moose Design <http://tinyurl.com/wordwagon> is designed specifically to prepare a child for a school reading program, with a well-designed letter and word recognition activity that provides structured practice with letters and letter sounds in the context of 103 common words organized into seven categories.

Interactive Alphabet 1.5, \$3, by Piikea Street <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/interactive-alphabet-abc/id383967580?mt=8> might be old, but it has a simple, responsive design that helps children make letter/sound/word associations. For F, you see a fan, along with the words "F is for Fan." You can then explore the screen -- touching the F sounds out the letter. This is an excellent first app that is high in child control.

Noodle Words, \$2.99, by NoodleWorks Interactive <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/noodle-words-active-word-game/id477765985?mt=8> converts 18 common words like run,

sparkle into active toys that jump, stretch, dance and sparkle if they are touched.

Monkey Word School Adventure, \$1.99, by Thup Games <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/monkey-word-school-adventure/id565951597?mt=8> contains six bite-sized phonics and word recognition games, plus simple management features so you can track what children do.



Reading For Fun

Here are some apps for providing an informal language experience.

Animal SnApp: Farm, \$3.99, by Nosy Crow <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/animal-snapp-farm/id563238581?mt=8> is a well-crafted make-your-own nursery rhyme, and an excellent language experience.

Monster's Socks, \$2.99, by Martin Hughes <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/monsters-socks/id521546698?mt=8> is a 12-screen adventure about a child-like monster (who is not scary) who wakes up to discover that he has lost his socks. Especially noteworthy: the way this title breaks away from typical page flips and lets you instead freely move forward or backward through the story.

Another Monster at the End of This Book, \$.99, by Callaway Digital Arts <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/another-monster-at-end-this/id473095033?mt=8> is the second in the series that pulls the child into Grover's creative attempts to keep Elmo (and your child) from turning the page, and discovering the monster (Elmo) on the last screen.

Storia, \$free, <http://www.scholastic.com/storia> is Scholastic's answer to Amazon.com. The online book store offers books in a



variety of screen types and sizes, for both computer or tablet. Book features include excellent navigation features, silky smooth page turning and a no-frills dictionary system.

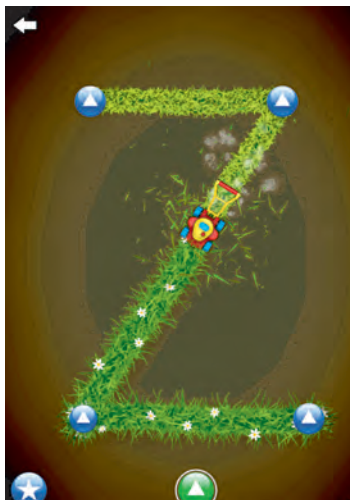
Oh the Pets You Can Get, \$3.99, by Oceanhouse Media <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/oh-pets-you-can-get!-all-about/id577277383?mt=8> is ideal for beginning readers. As with other Oceanhouse Media titles, each picture is cleverly labeled. See also **One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish**, \$3.99, by Oceanhouse Media. See also **Trains** by Byron Barton, \$.99, by Oceanhouse Media <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/trains-byron-barton/id562376571?mt=8>

Spanish/English

My principal friend specifically asked me for some apps that can provide informal, playful exposure to Spanish. The good news is that these are increasingly easy to find. Here are two.

ABC Farm, \$1.99, by Peapod Labs <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/abc-food/id460479661?mt=8#> is the latest release from Peapod labs that turns your iPad or iPhone screen into a bilingual (Spanish/English) alphabet-themed visual encyclopedia. Touching any of the letters within the word lets you quickly jump to a new set of words, offering secondary navigation. About a third of the photos include either YouTube videos or rub-away images. There are many Peapod Labs titles with a similar design (See also ABC House, ABC ZooBorns ABC Music, ABC Wildlife, ABC Play, ABC Food and ABC Go) but this is the first with the Spanish/English option. Our video demo is at <http://youtu.be/LRfDE5XxlgY>

Harry and the Haunted House (iPad), \$4.99, by Wonderful <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/harry-haunted-house-wonderful/id565239081?mt=8> is one of many of the original Living Books, and each makes an excellent addition to your bilingual library. Each screen is full of animated surprises that support the story and you can buy additional languages for \$2.99 an in-app feature within the parent settings. For ages 3-up.



Handwriting

Letter and word tracing apps abound. The best for a playful, structured introduction to letters is **LetterSchool**, \$2.99, by Boreaal Publishers <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/letter-school/id435476174?mt=8> with uppercase and lowercase letters, as well as numbers from 1 to 10. You can toggle between three types of letters/numeral styles -- D'Nealian (used in many US schools), HWT (Handwriting Without Tears) and Zaner-Bloser (the "traditional" format).

Language: Writing

Learning to write -- by combining letters into words, sentences, paragraphs and stories, is supported by many apps.

Word Wizard, \$2.99, by L'Escapadou <http://itunes.apple.com/app/id447312716> turns your iPad into a talking alphabet/language generator. To build a word, you drag it from an alphabet strip onto a 44 letter grid, where it snaps into place, pronouncing any word that might be created, including nonsense words.

Write My Name, \$4.99, by Project Injini <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/write-my-name-by-injini/id500623496?mt=8> is a clean, teacher friendly app that is good for helping children learn to write letters and words by tracing the uppercase and lowercase letters used in their name.

Telling Stories

Turns out the iPad is also good as a tool for giving children a voice.

DoodleCast for Kids, \$1.99, by zinc Roe Design <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/doodlecast-for-kids/id469487373?mt=8> is an easy to use, powerful "talk and draw" experience which makes self-narrating and sharing a drawing into a nearly one-step process.

Draw and Tell HD, \$1.99, by Duck Duck Moose Design <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/draw-tell-hd-by-duck-duck/id504752087?mt=8> is an excellent creativity app with both drawing and narration features. It turns your iPad into a drawing/flannel board and story telling machine.

Explain Everything, \$2.99, by Morris Cooke <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/explain-everything/id431493086?mt=8> is more of a teacher utility, but it could be very useful when plugged into an AppleTV system. It makes it easy to mix photos, movies and sketches with recorded sounds.

Spelling

These apps can make spelling practice much less tedious, by providing a setting were children can informally discover words.

Animal Crosswords, \$.99, by OkiDokiApps <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/animal-crosswords-english/id523130989?mt=8> is a solid collection of 56 crossword puzzles based on 300

common spelling words. You can toggle between upper/lowercase letters, and a "clean up and start over" mode lets you reset the crosswords and show/hide correct letters in crossword. Besides being good for playfully introducing site words, this app can be a good cooperative learning language experience because more than one child can help assemble words.



Montessori Crosswords, \$2.99, <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/montessori-crosswords-spelling/id384334005?mt=8> by L'Escapadou is another well designed set of 300 crossword puzzles, with letters that can sound themselves out. This is an extremely powerful early reading experience.

Science

These apps can help add some fiber (or some bats) to your science curriculum.

Jim Henson's Sid's Science Fair, \$2.99, by PBS Kids <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sids-science-fair/id462788044?mt=8> is really as much about math as it is about science. Using a science fair metaphor, the playful, easy-to-use collection of activities includes a magnifying glass to notice subtle differences, an interactive chart where items can be classified by shape, color and pattern and a time machine, with 14 sets of objects that can be put into order. These include an apple being eaten, a candle burning or a plant growing.

Bats! Furry Fliers of the Night, \$2.99, by Bookerella <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bats!-furry-fliers-night/id494297887?mt=8> will satisfy any child's curiosity about these amazing flying mammals. Each page includes an interactive feature that illustrates the biology of the bat; making this app like a small hands on museum. The content is based on the book by Mary Kay Carson.

Rounds: Franklin Frog, \$4.99, by Nosy Crow <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/rounds-parker-penguin/id577753717?mt=8> playfully introduces the concept of life-cycles. Children participate in a G-rated version of each stage of frog reproduction, helping a male frog hop, swim, croak, eat and find a female to reproduce. See also **Rounds: Parker Penguin**

Logic

These apps are thick with math-related skills like classification, seriation, memory and associated vocabulary. Each is high in child control, and provides something for everyone.

Bugs and Numbers, \$2.99, by Little Bit Studio <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bugs-and-buttons/id446031868?mt=8> is the third set of 18 bug and learning infested games and activities. The app is organized into three basic stages, to grow with a child; e.g., from basic counting to early fractions. The app also features 36 achievements and rewards and multiple user profiles. Our video demo is at <http://youtu.be/aTRiZ3dHxkA>. See also **Bugs and Bubbles** <http://itunes.apple.com/app/bugs-and-bubbles/id500195730?ls=1&mt=8> and **Bugs and Buttons** by Little Bit Studio, LLC <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bugs-and-buttons/id446031868?mt=8>

Highlights Hidden Pictures Puzzles, \$1.99, by Highlights for Children, Inc. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/highlights-hidden-pictures/id567496439?mt=8> contains 18 famous hidden picture illustrations; 9 organized around the theme "Bedtime," and 9 for "Fall Fun." The row of hints can be hidden if you like, to make the game more challenging. There's also a hint system that puts a circle around an item. A quick look: <http://youtu.be/Vo5Bd9TIZS4>

Build and Play 3D - Plane, Train, Robot and More, \$1.99, by Pronetis Kids <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/build-play-3d-plane-train/id545626598> looks a lot like Sort and Stack Toys, with nine snap together machines and vehicles that can be dragged and dropped into place. Incorrect answers just fall back to the side; correct positions fall into place with a satisfying snap. This is a great excellent starter app. See also **Sort and Stack Toys 3D** <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sort-and-stack-toys-3d/id545625065>

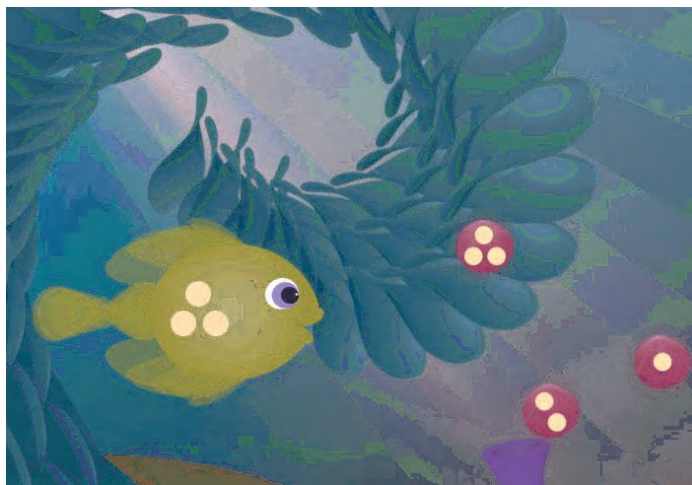


Go Go Games, \$1.99, by Go Go Games <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/go-go-games/id565022507?ls=1&mt=8> contains three well-designed and well-leveled classification games that start easy, and get harder. The transportation theme will have a strong appeal to some children.

Math Facts

Here's a universal truth -- every child will need to know their times tables. The general thinking is that fluency with these base level skills -- e.g., knowing that $8 \times 8 = 64$, without a pause, can create a foundation for later higher order math problem solving. Here are some apps for the job.

Motion Math: Hungry Guppy, \$2.99, by Motion Math Games <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/motion-math-hungry-guppy/id542563075?mt=8> connects small fingers with big concepts -- namely the principal of additive sums. The better you do, the harder the challenge. This is the fifth app from the Stanford University-inspired app studio Motion Math, and the second that deals with a hungry fish. See also **Motion Math: Wings**. It is an excellent addition to any iPad, especially if it is located in a preschool or Kindergarten classroom. See the video at <http://youtu.be/ZY3vxOxm1wA>



Park Math, \$1.99, by Duck Duck Moose Design <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/park-math-by-duck-duck-moose/id391407836?mt=8> contains seven easy-to-explore games, each with multiple ways to explore early math concepts. It is possible to toggle between two levels of play (preschool and kindergarten) The iPad version, called Park Math HD includes First Grade, with counting up to 100 and addition/subtraction with numbers up to 20.

Montessori Numbers, \$2.99, by L'Escapadou <http://bit.ly/montessorinumbers> contains four number sandboxes in one app, each good for letting a preschooler freely experiment with the first mathematical relationships using number sets that range from 0 to 1000. It is rare to find an early math app that offers this type of number range and flexibility. Here's a quick look: <http://bit.ly/numbersvideo> and <http://bit.ly/numbersvideo2>.

Count to 100!, \$1.99, by FuzzyBees <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/count-to-100!/id562791055?mt=8> is an interactive base ten (10×10) counting board that can be filled in with taps. A child can discover "there are twenty 5's that make up 100," or "counting by 12 creates stairsteps." You can either freely explore, or set up a challenge, such as count by 2s, 5s, 10s and 25s. We like how the app starts directly by showing the counting board, and the options are easy to find. Here's a quick look: <http://youtu.be/canYevjHBOs>.

Math vs Zombies, \$free, by Tap to Learn <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/math-games-math-vs-zombies/id470896560?mt=8> offers a fun and addicting format for practicing your subtraction, multiplication and division facts. If you're expecting higher order math thinking with this app, look elsewhere. The longer you play the more levels you unlock. The zany theme can be the sugar that helps the medicine go down. Video preview at <http://youtu.be/XO0W1MXBUvw>.

Geography

Having a copy of Google Earth is always useful, to supplement the traditional classroom globe. Here are some other apps to make the world seem a bit smaller:

Flat Stanley (App), \$free, by Flatter World Inc. <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/flat-stanley/id382161936?mt=8> was inspired by the 1963 book "Flat Stanley" by Jeff Brown, with help from Dale Hubert, a Canadian elementary teacher. This app rendition lets you superimpose a Flat Stanley cutout character over a photo taken with your iPad's camera.

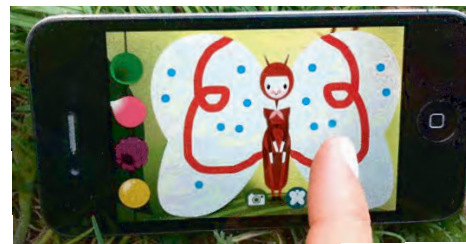
Barefoot World Atlas, \$7.99, by Barefoot Books <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/barefoot-world-atlas/id489221652?mt=8> combines highlights from each country with realtime facts from Wolfram/Alpha. All in all, there's plenty to explore, and the spinning globe organization works far better than a book.

Stack the States, \$.99, by Dan Russell-Pinson <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/stack-the-states/id381342267?mt=8> is a bit tricky for most Kindergarteners because of the reading involved, but the game-like format introduces the names, locations, major cities and sizes of the US states, plus flags.

Art & Creativity

Touch screens are excellent experimental scribble pads that let you try out visual ideas.

Paint My Wings, \$.99, by Toca Boca <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/paint-my-wings/id432858701?mt=8> provides a playful introduction to symmetry, starting with a butterfly who says "paint my wings!" Using a palette of colors, you finger paint lines or dots on one of the wings, and can see it mirrored on the other wing, in real time.



MadPad, \$.99 for iPhone, \$2.99 for iPad, by Smule, Inc. <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/madpad-remix-your-life/id456072329?mt=8> turns your camera equipped iPhone or iPad into a sound mix board. Instead of using existing songs and beats, it lets you capture everyday sounds, which can be recorded and played back or warped with a two finger swipe. Look out for in-app sales and sponsored content.

Foldify, \$2.99, by Pixle <http://itunes.com/apps/foldify> plays with your notion of 2D and 3D space, by letting you scribble on one dimension (the flat, 2D part) and see the result, in real time, on a 3D rendering that you can spin with your finger. Take a quick look, at <http://youtu.be/xSjLjbHcsW4>.

Music

Can't afford your own music teacher? Here are some apps for your music folder.

TonePad, \$.99 by LoftLab <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tonepad-pro/id318285192?mt=8> is a musical creativity experience that lets you compose your own rhythmic simple songs by arranging dots (or notes) on a 16x16 grid. Like the pins on a music box, each dot activates a tone, making it easy to make rhythmic and melodic patterns.

A Jazzy Day, \$4.99, by The Melody Book <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/jazzy-day-music-education/id493451508?mt=8> introduces children to Jazz music and it's instruments. There are no cheesy synthesizers here. In addition, there's a full jazz Big Band arrangement that can be mixed and matched, making it fun to play with various parts of the band to hear how they turn into a "conversation."

Dr. Seuss Band, \$.99, by Oceanhouse Media <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/dr.-seuss-band/id474940131?mt=8> is a zany Dr. Seuss horn, with eight buttons that can play a whole-tone scale. You can either freely improvise by touching the keys, or you can use the one octave keyboard on the bottom of the screen to earn points by matching songs from the song book.

Toca Band, \$2.99, by Toca Boca <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/toca-band/id521640648?mt=8> turns your iPad or iPhone into a playful, powerful musical sandbox. Our testers wished for a pause button, so you could silence your band without having to rebuild it from scratch. Plug your iPad or iPod Touch into a set of speakers, and have a classroom dance, where different children can take control of different instruments.

The Orchestra, \$13.99, by Touch Press <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-orchestra/id560078788?mt=8> turns an iPad an interactive tour of a working symphonic orchestra. It is well crafted and immersive, and introduces some ideas such as music notation and scores. The app was created by Touch Press, in partnership with the Music Sales Group and Esa-Pekka Salonen. This is a big app -- 1.95 GB.

Social Emotional Development

Four Little Corners, \$2.99, by DADA Company <https://itunes.apple.com/app/four-little-corners/id598573155> is a wonderful adaptation of a printed children's book by Jerome Ruillier, adapted for the iPad by Dada Company, from Spain. The story is about a square who can't get through a door, because it is the wrong shape. Our video demo is at <http://youtu.be/lifcw6A3d3M>.

Nash Smasher!, \$1.99, by Crab Hill Press <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nash-smasher!-for-ipad/id405340373?mt=8> is a 23 screen book about Nash, a 7 year old boy who likes to break things -- a theme that any child can understand. Each page has one or multi-stage hot spots, plus pull tabs and dials that let you do the smashing (and un-smashing). The story has a happy ending, as Nash learns how to control his impulses.

Indoor Recess

My PlayHome, \$2.99, by Bluefish. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/my-playhome/id439628153?mt=8> turns your iPad into a four room playhouse where just about anything can be moved around and re-arranged. This is a well designed, open ended play experience that children can enjoy in a small group.

More Trucks, \$1.99, by Duck Duck Moose Design <https://itunes.apple.com/app/id609771588> is the sequel to the first Trucks app; with four fun and playful vehicle-themed activities. Our testers especially liked putting out the fires, playing tic-tac-toe against the firehouse dog, and racing the drag racers. Quick look: <http://youtu.be/aOhmzWyggM4>

Pip and Posy: Fun and Games, \$2.99, by Nosy Crow <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/pip-and-posy-fun-and-games/id514916095?ls=1&mt=8> is a well crafted collection of jigsaw puzzles, games of concentration and coloring books. There are five games in all, each featuring the art of the German book illustrator Axel Scheffler and the trademark British Nosy Crow narration. This is a great all-purpose app to have for a rainy day or a long car trip. For ages 3-9.

SmackTalk (App) 1.3, \$1.99, by Marcus Satellite <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/smacktalk/id306752436?mt=8> See your voice coming out of a Chihuahua with Smack Talk (\$1, 2-up), a sound morphing app that turns your iPad into an echo chamber.

Story Toys Jr. Farm 123, \$free, by StoryToys <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/farm-123-free-storytoys-jr/id508002368?mt=8> features a solid design and playful 3D graphics. This particular story mixes farm animals with an all-to-common counting theme. What makes it stand out is the way the 3D graphics are synced with your screen movements, giving it a "book on a stage" effect. See also StoryToys Grimm's Snow White, \$1.99, by StoryToys <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/grimms-snow-white-3d-interactive/id577460310?mt=8>

Toca Hair Salon 2, \$1.99, by Toca Boca <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/toca-hair-salon-2/id569632660?mt=8> is the second edition of Toca Hair Salon is just as zany, with some added frosting that makes it more fun.

Toca Tea Party, \$2.99, by Toca Boca <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/toca-tea-party/id424174500?mt=8> Turn your iPad into a top-down view of a tea party complete with slurps and spills, with a real-looking set of tea cups, juice glasses, pastries and so on. The experience is high in child control, and the sounds add a lot to the play.