



Children's TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

Who Ever Said the
Common Core had to
be Ugly?

Why Adults Need to
be Time Cops

Five Sites and 10
Videos on Pumpkins

How to Make a
Mini-Jumbotron for
Just \$970

40 Fresh Reviews



Above: The "Simon Says" game in *Bugs and Buttons 2* (p. 8) is proof that beauty and skills practice can co-exist

CTR, October 2013 Vol. 21, No 10, Issue 163

All Fixed Up, p. 7
Big Hugs Elmo, p. 7
Bubble Pop!: Int. Math Challenge, p. 18
Bugs and Buttons 2, p. 8
Can Do! Reading Game Show: Phonemic Awareness, p. 18
Can Do! Science Game Show: Solar System, p. 18
Colors!, p. 18
Cosmic Reactor, p. 8
Counting, p. 8
Digital Passport, p. 9
Disney Infinity Toy Box App, p. 9
Easi Speak USB Recorder, p. 10
Educade, p. 19
LEGO Legends of Chima: Laval's Journey, p. 10

Montessori Math: 1st Operations, p. 11
Montessori Math: Add & Subtract Large Numbers, p. 11
My Life as a Cat, p. 12
My Little Pony - A Canterlot Wedding HD, p. 12
NameGames, p. 12
Nintendo 2DS, p. 19
Peppa Pig Happy Mrs. Chicken, p. 13
Phonics Quiz: Game Show, p. 19
Place Value: Quick Shot!, p. 20
Playground 3 - ABC Edition, p. 13
Pokémon X and Pokémon Y, p. 20
Quick Tap Spanish, p. 14
Rainbow Sentences, p. 14
Room on the Broom, p. 14
Rosetta Stone Kids Lingo Letter Sounds, p. 15
Sago Mini Bug Builder, p. 15
Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 Kids, p. 21
Sonic Lost World, p. 21

SoundSelf
Symmetry
School:
Learning
Geometry, p.
16
Tap the Cat, p. 16
Ten In The Bed, p.
16
Toca Cars, p. 17
Transformers Rescue Bots
Beam Box Game System, p. 22
Ugglys, The: Your Gross Best Friend, p. 17
ustyme, p. 22

* Donotes an "Editor's Choice."
See p. 4



Welcome to the 163rd monthly issue of *Children's Technology Review*, with 40 reviews, and 13 Editor's Choice selections. This month, we've added a new feature for our paid subscribers -- a new weekly email publication. Here are my headlines:

Who Said "Common Core" Had to Mean "Ugly?"

Of the 40 or so products I look at in depth each month, it's safe to say that some could be categorized as rather homely, particularly when a curriculum gets involved. Can't "learning" and "aesthetics" go together? Sometimes. If you look in the ebook category, you can find the work of some outstanding illustrators and musicians. Another noteworthy exception is **Bugs and Buttons 2**, on this month's cover. Each of the 18 activities has a unique orchestrated sound track, and the illustrations use machines that look so real that you can almost smell the oil. The message to publishers? Thanks to retinal display screens and stereo speakers, there are simply fewer excuses for not looking, and sounding beautiful.

Even the Queen is Worried

My Google News alert has been busy this month, pulling up fresh stories tagged "children" and "technology" at a rate of about 2 per day.

I was curious to find out how positive or negative the messages about technology are so I analyzed the most recent 50 headlines and coded the language as either "positive," "negative" or "neutral."

The results? Most (21) deal with negative effects, using words like worry and fear, reflecting her Royal Majesty's view on ebooks. The editorial deals with bad parenting, distraction and addiction.

Nineteen (19) have positive messages, describing how technology can help children with special needs or helped a child learn; and ten (10) are "neutral" with neither a positive or a negative spin. So, if you're worried about the effects of technology on children, know you're in some royal company.

Why Adults Have to be "Time Cops"

If the queen is worried about excessive use of technology by children, should we be also? Perhaps. Based on my observations at Mediatech, I'm concerned about children spending too much time with lower quality "time wicks," or apps specifically designed to remove large chunks of time from a day. Let me explain. First consider that the amount of childhood time any human gets is finite. From age 0 to 12 years, it's about 64,000 minutes; an amount that doesn't count sleeping, but it does include school, bathing and playing with apps. From a Piagetian point of view, that's how long you get to make it through the first three stages, into formal operations. (Thanks to YouTube, you can watch this progression, compressed to 2.5 minutes for a single child at <http://youtu.be/RtyqS68ViWk>. As parents and educators, our mission should be to make those minutes count, by considering DAP

Continued on page 5

Queen voices concern that children may desert books for technology

Author Joanne Harris tells how Queen echoed findings of a recent literacy study during MBE ceremony

Liz Bury
theguardian.com, Friday 11 October 2013 11:11 EDT
Jump to comments (1)



Digital dilemma ... Joanne Harris is greeted by the Queen, who is worried about the influence of technology on children's reading habits. Photograph: Anthony Devlin/PA

As digital media play an increasing role in children's lives, the Queen has spoken of her fear that electronic devices will reduce the time they spend reading traditional books.

October 2013

Volume 21, No. 10, Issue 163

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

Director of Publishing Matthew DiMatteo

Video Editor Ben Kates

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

Office Manager Megan Billitti
(megan@childrenstech.com)

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.

OUR RULES. No ads, gimmicks or politics; we work for the benefit of children. *CTR* follows editorial guidelines at (<http://childrenstech.com/editorial-guidelines/>). Highlights include:

- We don't sell or profit from the products we review. Review products are donated to the non-profit Mediatech Foundation (www.mediatech.org).
- We don't distribute, sell or leverage subscriber information.
- Contributors are required to disclose bias.
- There is no sponsored or advertising content of any variety.
- We're transparent; disclosing our review instrument and sources of potential bias.

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>

Contents © 2013 by Active Learning Associates, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Your Subscription is Your Key to 11,164 Archived Reviews

Your paid \$30 or \$120 subscription to *CTR* includes exclusive password access to the new *Children's Technology Review* 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.

5 sites & ten videos about

Pumpkins

Is a pumpkin a fruit or a vegetable? How big can a pumpkin grow? Let's find out!

1. Veggie or fruit?

The History Channel <http://bitly.com/1660l3o> says pumpkins are vegetables, as noteworthy members of the gourd family. Their cousins include cucumbers, melons, cantaloupes and watermelons. They are native to Central America and Mexico, but now grow on six continents.

2. What country first turned pumpkins into scary jack-o-lanterns?

A. Mexico B. Ireland C. USA

The University of Illinois <http://bitly.com/181EqQe> says that the Irish and Scottish carved the first jack-o-lanterns out of turnips; but then they started using pumpkins imported from America.

3. Can a pumpkin weigh more than a New Jersey Governer?

Yes. At <http://bitly.com/18WXKOi> you'll learn about a guy in New Hampshire who grew one that weighted one ton, or 2000 pounds. If you want to grow a giant one yourself, you might want to visit a site like <http://www.howarddill.com/> but the seeds can cost \$50 each.



4. How far can you throw a pumpkin?

At <http://www.punkinchunkin.com/> you can learn about this crazy new sport where people build special machines that can launch their pumpkins into the air.



5. Which types of pumpkins are best for carving?

At Pumpkin Masters <http://bitly.com/160lCCt> you'll learn how to pick out the perfect pumpkin for carving. They say you should find one that sits up easily, doesn't have any dark mold spots and is lighter-colored and softer.

Have a Safe Halloween! <http://www.cdc.gov/family/halloween/>

LittleClickers is made possible by
Safe, fun Internet
explorations
for children.
Computer
Explorers

LittleClickers is brought to you by Computer Explorers, who is offering camps on programming. Visit www.computerexplorers.com to learn more. 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 the web editor, Megan Billitti [MB] megan@childrenstech.com; or call 908-284-0404 (9 - 3 PM, EST).

Thanks to Megan Billitti for this month's column.

Cover art from <http://twitterevolutions.com/bgs/leaves-real.jpg>

STUFF TO DO

1. Roast some pumpkin seeds. Here's how! A site called "All Recipes" provides instructions: <http://bitly.com/1cc1JI6>

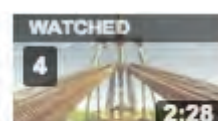
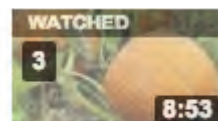
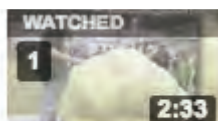
2. Carve a strange looking pumpkin! At Better Home & Gardens you can learn how to make a pumpkin stencil <http://bitly.com/1frECgr>



Pumpkin videos

Here's are videos for this month

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcBVHzUUEKwnsRvdPDA3y9dWgbv_zBiHR



October '13 Editor's Choice



Here are summaries of the 13 highest rated products from this month's batch of 40 reviews.

Babies and Toddlers

NameGames, \$free, \$3.99 for full version, by Name Games LLC <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/namegames/id584935132?mt=8> is a mash-up between a photo album and a busy box. When a baby -- either accidentally or intentionally -- touches a bubble on the screen with your face, he or she will hear a prerecorded message. For ages 1 to 2.

Sago Mini Bug Builder, \$free, by Sago Sago <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sago-mini-bug-builder/id657821775?mt=8> is ideal as a young child's first app. Children transform a simple shape into a zany bug. You start with a cocoon (or egg) and touch it to help it hatch. For ages 1.5 to 5.

Preschoolers and Kindergarteners

Peppa Pig Happy Mrs. Chicken, \$2.99, by Strawdog Studios Limited <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/peppa-pig-happy-mrs-chicken/id388615641#> is an old app, but one we were happy to discover. Six no-fail games features Peppa Pig and his animated animal friends. The more you play, the more stickers you win. For ages 3-6.

Playground 3 - ABC Edition, \$3.99, by Spielplatz <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/playground-3-abc-edition/id574794981?mt=8> is actually a "drill ground" with six well designed activities. There are no in app sales or questionable business practices in this app. For ages 4-6.

All Fixed Up, \$3.99, by Red Piggy Press <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/all-fixed-up-interactive-kids/id583923680?mt=8> This 20 screen non-fiction ebook contains some innovative page transitions and animated features to support the story, in this case, about a father who has to be away from home for an extended period of time. Need to know: A microphone icon lets you record your own narration. It is not possible to change the gender of the traveling parent. So if mom travels you're out of luck. For ages 4-8.

Bugs and Buttons 2, \$2.99, by Little Bit Studio, LLC <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bugs-and-buttons-2/id686968315?mt=8> Visually rich and thick with carefully leveled pre-math opportunities, this follow up to Bugs and Buttons (CTR February 2012), contains another well crafted set of 18 math and logic activities. Whether it's for solitary play or for a small group, this no fail app always provides something interesting to do. For ages 3-12.



Early Elementary

Toca Cars, \$.99, by Toca Boca <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/toca-cars/id689936776?mt=89:20:45 PM> offers a compelling fine motor experience that's easy to start fooling around with, and that you find yourself still playing an hour later. Fun surprises include a dog that chases your car. Testers wanted a larger area to explore. For ages 3-9.

Cosmic Reactor, \$2.99, by Fingerprint Digital <https://itunes.apple.com/app/cosmic-reactor-arithmetic/id674255659?ls=1&mt=8> lets two players compete in seven fast-paced math facts mini-games, testing their addition, subtraction, multiplication or division skills. For ages 5-11.

Disney Infinity Toy Box App, \$free with in-app sales, by Disney Interactive, Inc. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/disney-infinity-toy-box/id625520018?mt=8> is powerful, easy to use but also contains plenty of tempting \$1.99 in-app sale items. It also represents a portal to toys and video games, so consider yourself warned. As with the Minecraft app, you can freely build and explore, however, we found this experience to be easier to use and to offer more creative options. For ages 6-up.

Montessori Math: 1st Operations, \$3.99, by Les Trois Elles Interactive <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id627950311?mt=8> includes an innovative number spitting game where you place your fingers on both sides of the multi-touch screen. For older children, See also **Montessori Math: Add & Subtract Large Numbers** (\$4.99 at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id661156236?mt=8>) which is designed specifically for children who can already read "large" 2-digit numbers. For ages 6-9.

Upper Elementary

LEGO Legends of Chima: Laval's Journey, \$30, by Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, Inc. Fifteen levels of side-scrolling problem solving await in the land of Chima, with 60 characters and a variety of tools. For ages 8-up.

Quick Tap Spanish, \$1.99, by Fingerprint Digital <https://itunes.apple.com/app/quick-tap-spanish-premium/id677784035?ls=1&mt=8> offers a fun way to learn 100 common words in Spanish. This noisy, fun quiz game turns your iPad into a two player race, to see which player can match common Spanish words the fastest. For ages 5-11.

Continued from page 2

(Developmentally Appropriate Practice). Enter apps like Candy Crush, Doodle Jump and Angry Birds; which use powerful technology for less-than powerful behaviors. These experiences exercise short term memory, and aren't harmful in small doses, but they exploit behavior shaping techniques that coax "one more play" out of a child, using reinforcement techniques that could've been pulled directly from BF Skinner's lab. They're like cholesterol for those all important childhood minutes. The queen's right. As these new types of powerful behavior altering experiences enter our child's pockets, we all have to become time cops, to keep things in balance and give our children access to "only the best" -- on and off the screen.



Lotte Time Lapse: Birth to 12 years in 2 min. 45.

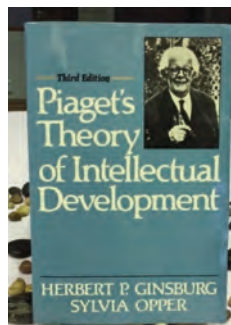
A baby girl (above), shown 12 years later (below). In 2013, a Dutch father named Frans Hofmeester (www.franshofmeester.nl) created a time lapse video of his daughter from birth to 12. The work is a reminder of the amazing changes that happen over the first 12 years. On YouTube at <http://youtu.be/RtyqS68ViWk>



A QUOTE FROM JEAN PIAGET

"The principle goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done— men who are creative, inventive, and discoverers. The second goal of education is to form minds which can be critical and cannot accept everything they are offered. The great danger today is of slogans, collective opinions, ready-made trends of thought. We have to be able to resist individually, to criticize, to distinguish between what is proven and what is not. So we need pupils who are active, who learn early to find out by themselves, partly by their own spontaneous activity and partly through material we set up for them; who learn early to tell what is verifiable and not what is simply the first idea to come to them."

(Piaget, "Development and Learning, 1964, p. 5; from Piaget's *Theory of Intellectual Development*, 3rd Edition by Ginsburg and Oppen).



Announcing CTR Weekly: Three Noteworthy Children's Apps This Week

We're pleased to announce a new weekly email publication, following the success of a weekly format we created originally for Andrea Smith of Mashable; adapted later for the New York Times, sans ratings.

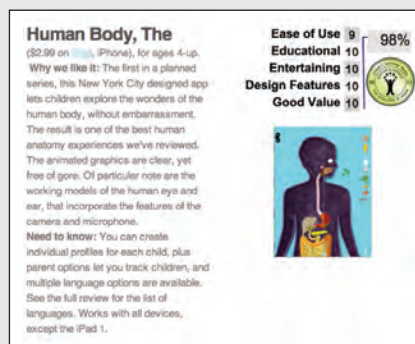
With this new more timely format, we excerpt our full reviews, which you'll still get in our review data-

base and monthly issue, down to a few sentences describing "why we like it" and "need to know." This copy will be provided along with a screen shot and rating details. We'll also include direct links to the respective stores (e.g., iTunes, Android or Amazon).

WHEN: Every Wednesday at 6:00 AM

WHAT: Three bite-size reviews of noteworthy children's apps.

WHO: Delivered to paid CTR subscribers



Make a Mini Jumbotron on a Shoestring

Flemington Free Public Library Director Shawn Armington wanted an affordable, powerful, multi-purpose digital bulletin board for less than \$1000.

I was able to do it with \$975, not counting taxes, shipping and installation by exploiting special sale prices and using mainstream consumer products.

Ingredients:

- One HD (High Definition) large screen display (\$420 at Walmart)
- One articulating wall mounting kit (\$50)
- One Apple TV (\$100, Apple.com)
- One 16 GB iPad 2 (\$350, Apple.com)
- Foam case for iPad (\$40, www.gripcase.com)
- Cables, HDMI for \$5.79 and surge protector for \$9 (Amazon.com).

Not included: taxes, extended warranty, shipping, Wi-Fi, adhesive-backed Velcro and electricity.

TOTAL: \$969.74

NOTES: Shop around for TVs and read reviews from different sources. We found a Sceptre 50" 1080p HDTV at our local Walmart, on sale for \$419 that had everything we needed. This included three HDMI inputs including VGA in for input.

We wanted LCD (not Plasma) and 1080 pixel resolution (not 720p). We plan on using velcro to mount the remotes (both for the TV and the Apple TV) on the side or the top of the TV, so they are easy to find.

The VGA graphics port is useful for people who want to connect computers. Because getting to ports can be tricky, it might be handy to keep a VGA extension cable plugged in all the time, hanging below the screen. It's handy to have an separate set of self powered portable speakers for this type of use. Make sure you budget for extra HDMI cable (about \$10) and a surge protector.

To mount the TV to the wall, we picked up a "Premium Atlantic Articulating Mount" for 37" to 64" Flat Panel TVs. (\$50 also at Walmart).

For the cables, we selected the AmazonBasics High-Speed HDMI Cable (6.5 feet for \$5.79) and a Belkin 6-Outlet Wall-Mount Surge Protector (\$9, Home Depot).

The \$100 HD Apple TV was an easy choice.

For the iPad, we had plenty of options and probably would recommend a slightly larger 32 GB or 64 GB size, considering that some apps can be up to a 2 GB in size. To stay within budget, we stayed with the 16 GB iPad 2 for \$350, which contains all the power needed for the Apple TV. To make the iPad more child friendly, we included a foam case from GripCase USA (\$40, www.gripcase.com).

MAKING IT WORK

So now that you have it set up and operating, how do you use it? The concept of screen sharing is a wonderful thing.

When we first started Mediatech, we installed a very expensive hardwired screen sharing system for this purpose. The system took a crew three days to complete the work, and the hardware alone cost over \$10,000. It worked well for a while but soon a component would break and we stopped using it. Sound familiar?

AppleTV and other similar types of screen sharing devices that use Wi-Fi offer hope. Don't be fooled by "TV" in the title. The real power of the Apple TV system is that it uses your Wi-Fi router as a hub, creating an invisible wire that connects any iOS device to the big screen, as long as both are using the same Wi-Fi channel. If you have an iPhone, iPod touch or iPad you can see if an Apple TV is within range using the home button twice and swiping to the left. For System 7, swipe up from the screen bottom to see the "Airplay" options. Once it is installed you can use it for:

- Running a digital story time. Display a popular e-book that may be associated with a printed version on the big screen. Let children take turns swiping the pages or touching items for discoveries on a page.
- Turn your iPad into a WebCam to highlight printed pages from books.
- Record children reading traditional books using your tablet video camera features. Replay the performances at a later time.
- Display a weather app especially during a weather event. People like watching the real-time radar, for example as a storm passes overhead.
- Use the screen to show news pages during breaking events.
- Use the screen to show YouTube videos. Especially highlight local personalities, events, organizations, schools and businesses.
- Make sure that the screen is facing outward toward a public window. You can use the screen to display upcoming events or other important announcements such as the library hours.
- Host a new app demonstration evening. Using Apple devices anyone can demonstrate their favorite app, putting it on the big screen for a closer look by the entire group.
- Make a screensaver out of slides that depict noteworthy views from the area. Have slides play throughout the day.
- Make a slideshow by quickly snapping pictures of new books or video games that have recently arrived in the library. When not being used, your Apple TV goes into screen saver mode. It is possible to choose any cloud-based photo library for this screen saver. With some work, you can create a series of seasonal or theme-related information displays.



Feature Reviews

OCTOBER 2013

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.

All Fixed Up

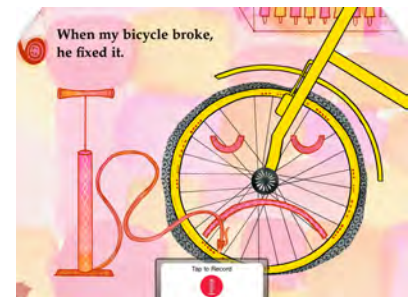
This 20 screen non-fiction ebook contains some innovative page transitions and animated features to support the story, in this case, about a father who has to be away from home for an extended period of time. This is a situation that might be well known to a military family.

The illustrations are well done. It is easy to navigate to any page from any point, and you can select from two languages (English or Spanish). A microphone icon lets you record the narration on each page if you like. Need to know: contains links to social media on the last page. Also, it is not possible to change the gender of the traveling parent. So if mom travels you're out of luck.

Details: Red Piggy Press, www.redpiggypress.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 4-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, recording voice, family dynamics, Spanish. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 10/14/2013. [WB]

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

88%



Big Hugs Elmo

Large, red, a bit chatty and certainly huggable, this year's animatronic Elmo is all about snuggling. Now produced under the Hasbro Playskool brand, Elmo has innovative foot-long arms (with a 22-inch arm span). Each arm consists of a fabric covered flexible plastic band with three hinges, so they can hug, or be bent in just about any direction. An internal motion detector knows if Elmo is upright or laying down, and a sleep mode can be manually toggled from the back (the switch is hidden behind the Velcro door). When in Sleep mode, Elmo will run through one routine, start yawning, and go to sleep for good, until the switch is moved back to the "play" position. So if an active child rolls on him, he won't wake up. This feature makes Elmo a viable nap or bedtime toy. Besides the hugging, Elmo has a sing-a-long mode, and four pretend scenarios where Elmo says such things as "let's pretend to be a horse." It also helps that Elmo is still huggable and has appeal, even when he is turned off or has low batteries. Whether he's worth \$60 is another question, however. That's a lot to pay for features that a child's imagination will provides for free. And you don't need the four AA batteries.

Details: Playskool (Hasbro), www.hasbro.com/playskool/. Price: \$60. Ages: 1 - 4. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: a watch me toy. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 2/24/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	10
Educational	6
Entertaining	8
Design Features	9
Good Value	8

82%





Bugs and Buttons 2

Visually rich and thick with carefully leveled pre-math opportunities, this follow up to Bugs and Buttons (CTR February 2012), contains another well crafted set of 18 math and logic activities. If you liked the first edition, you'll like this one too. There's more variety, better leveling, and management features that make it possible to keep individual profiles for different children.

There are two modes: automatic guide and explore, both options found on the first menu, so you never feel trapped. To tie the games together, a new scavenger hunt feature challenges you to find a hidden bug in each activity. Other nice touches include the use of multitouch in several of the puzzles, so children can work collaboratively to solve puzzles.

There's also a rubber band bouncing game that asks you to coordinate to finger movements; offering a rare fine motor exercise. Besides sorting a plentiful assortment of beautiful jewel-like buttons, there's an antique piano that asks you to repeat a song, a remote control car, and a game similar to Frogger where you help a cricket find his way across busy traffic.

There are no in app sales and the kid's lock provides a gated area for parents. This is where you can turn on or off the background music without turning off the activity sounds, or where you can create a profile for each child.

Whether it's for solitary play or for a small group, this no fail app always provides something interesting to do.

Details: Little Bit Studio, LLC, www.littlebitstudio.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone (340 MB). Teaches/Purpose: classification, logic, matching, seriation, alphabet order, memory, timing, temporal relations, angles, music. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.9 stars. Entry date: 9/19/2013. [WB]

Cosmic Reactor

Two players compete in seven fast-paced math facts mini-games, testing their addition, subtraction, multiplication or division skills.

The app turns your iPad into a two player buzzer (players sit face to face with the iPad in the center). The games come with themes like Red Rock Rumble and Dark Planet. There are different challenge levels, making this a useful app. Part of the Fingerprint Network.

Details: Fingerprint Digital, www.fingerprintplay.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 5-11. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math facts, addition subtraction multiplication and division. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 10/2/2013. [WB]

Counting

This app looks good, but the interactivity is limited and the illustrations don't match the numbers. For example, for the numeral 7, you see seven pumpkins. But if you tap the pumpkins (say, to count them) you see a photo showing ten pumpkins. The quality photos are nice to explore. The last page of the app contains links to other Twin Sisters apps.

Details: Twin Sisters Productions, Inc., www.twinsisters.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, counting, math. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3 stars. Entry date: 9/25/2013. [WB]

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



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



Ease of Use	8	60%
Educational	7	
Entertaining	6	
Design Features	4	
Good Value	5	





Digital Passport

Available as a Flash website or as an app, and designed specifically to deliver free curriculum with the side benefit of building an email list of schools for the publisher, Digital Passport uses technology to help children learn about technology; creating a nice match between medium and message. Content includes six modules designed to teach digital safety skills.

The menu is clear and well designed, introducing the downsides of "Twalking" (talking and texting at the same time) and cyberbullying (making choices about what to do if a friend is cyberbullied).

Need to know: The videos and tutorial trap children at times, by not offering an escape option. While the management features are good, you are forced to identify your school district, and give up your email address.

Details: Common Sense Media, www.digitalpassport.org. Price: \$free. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Android, iPad, Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: technology, digital safety. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 9/9/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	80%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	6	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	9	



Disney Infinity Toy Box App

Powerful, easy to use but also containing plenty of tempting \$1.99 in-app sale items, this open-ended construction kit expands the Disney Infinity cluster of toys and and video games, onto your iPad. It also represents a portal to toys and video games, so consider yourself warned.

As with the Minecraft app, you can freely build and explore, however, we found this experience to be easier to use and to offer more creative options. Those who question the use of the multi-touch tablet for building and gaming should try this app. It's evidence that it can be done, in a very engaging way. You start with one character (Mr. Incredible) and one empty, floating square of green terrain. You soon discover that you can add more land, in blocks, and enhance it with cliffs, mountains and waterfalls. If you make a mistake, you can edit the parts fairly easily. Don't miss the castles, race tracks and trees.

The biggest news is how your work can be played on other types of screens. You can also download other people's worlds, or upload yours for public use (not unlike "Little Big Planet.") Downloading one of the pre-made worlds wasn't exactly glitch free. Besides getting lost in a maze of menus and needing a Disney account, we found it hard to get started.

If you don't have an existing account, however, don't worry. You'll still have a successful building experience. In short, Disney Infinity: Toy Box may be free app, but it's a full standalone experience. The free edition includes one Mr. Incredible with a full set of building tools; the other 21 characters are shown as shadows -- to download them, you must pay \$1.99. So do the math, that's \$42 for all the characters. You can also download figures free if you have a web codes included with figures at retail.

Our testers liked the intuitive multi-touch controls, which made it easy to build or edit a world or drive a car. There's plenty to do, with 60 free items to mix and match. The app gives players the ability to transfer Toy Boxes cross-platform for further editing and play. At the same time, any item unlocked in a player's console version of the Toy Box will become available in the app. The app was created by Avalanche Software and Escalation Studios for Disney Interactive, released September 18, 2013. It runs on the iPad versions 2,3,4 and iPad Mini. It won't work on smaller screens.

Details: Disney Interactive, Inc., www.disney.com. Price: \$free with in-app sales. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad 2, 3, 4 and Mini, 250 MB download. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, logic, spatial relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 10/14/2013. [WB]

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





Easi Speak USB Recorder

Good for capturing and playing back audio in the classroom or on a field trip, the Easi Speak USB Recorder (\$70, Educational Resources) plugs into the USB port of your computer for both charging and file transfer. It can also be charged using most USB phone or iPad chargers.

About the size of a small ice cream cone, the 5 inch long device can store up to four hours of audio, in WAV or MP3 formats. The hassle free internal lithium ion battery charges in about 4 hours, lasts for 3 hours and can't be replaced.

Multiple recordings can be stored on 128 MB of internal memory. They can be played back instantly using forward/rewind/play buttons, or copied to a PC or Mac. To do this, you unsnap the plastic cap to find the USB plug. The audio files can be played back using any software that can read MP3 or WAV files -- these are very common, helping to make this digital recorder a teacher's best friend. The kit includes a lanyard and a USB extension cable, which is handy because the fat base won't easily fit into the USB ports on most thin laptops. Audacity music editing software (free) is recommended for editing and storing files.

Strengths: durable, fairly easy to figure out, and the quality is good. We like how it is an all-in-one unit, making it a nice "grab and go" device for any teacher. The integrated speaker lets you hear what you just recorded, or you can listen using your own headphones.

Weaknesses: the user interface is cryptic and could be improved. For example, there are eight different LED codes to signal such things as when the microphone is charging or recording; or when the battery is low. These are hard to understand.

Details: Learning Resources, www.learningresources.com. Price: \$70. Ages: 4-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: microphone, sounds, speech, audio recording, record keeping, portfolios. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 8/20/2012. [WB]

LEGO Legends of Chima: Laval's Journey

Fifteen levels of problem solving involve helping Laval, a brave warrior and prince of the Lion Tribe, fight for justice. You see, Laval must unlock the secret of the legendary triple-CHI armor before his arch-rival, Cragger, can manipulate its power to threaten the balance of Chima.

You leap, swing and fly through the lands of Chima, where you meet 60 characters, collect tools and look for secret parts of the game. Your points can be used for items in an online store, called the Chima Vault (www.lego.com/chima/the-vault). These items can also be used in the LEGO Legends of the Chima Online when the online world. Prices are \$30 for the Nintendo 3DS and PS Vita, and \$20 for the Nintendo DS.

Details: Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, Inc., www.warnerbros.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS, Vita, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic, spatial thinking, problem solving. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 6/20/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	7
Design Features	8
Audio Quality	9
Battery Life	9
Good Value	9

84%



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

88%





Montessori Math: 1st Operations

Maria Montessori would probably have loved this set of innovative activities, especially the number spitting game where you place your fingers on both sides of the multi-touch screen. There's also a set of dynamic number tables that help you visualize the underlying patterns in numbers and number relationships. But she probably would not have liked the rather cluttered and complicated first menu. But don't let that slow you down from downloading this app immediately, especially if you have an interest in helping young children learn about math concepts.

Content covers four concepts: addition, subtraction, doubles/halves, and odd/even, up to 99. Features include an age-gated parent menu, that gives you the ability to toggle between 11 languages. You can also adjust the challenge, sound options and amount of help. See also Montessori Math: Add & Subtract Large Numbers, the big brother app to this one.

Details: Les Trois Elles Interactive, <http://lestroiselles.com/en>. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 5-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 4.3 or later). Teaches/Purpose: math, place value, addition, subtraction, basic facts, halves. English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian and Korean. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 7/23/2013. [WB]

Montessori Math: Add & Subtract Large Numbers

Designed specifically for children who can already read "large" 2-digit numbers like 12 or 78; on up to 9,999, this Montessori-inspired set of three activities presents a step-by-step, drag and drop approach to addition and subtraction. The overall presentation is clean but dry, making it well suited for a large screen classroom display.

The first game, called "stamp game" was adapted directly from Montessori. This three level activity asks children to construct two numerals by dragging and dropping small tiles onto a base-ten board. It then asks them to add them together, and enter an answer. Our testers found the tiles to be rather small, and all the dragging required to create larger quantities became tedious.

The other two activities are called bead frame and magic slate and both are useful for providing practice with each step of the math problem solving process. As you play, you earn points which can be redeemed for parts in the "Monster lab." Parent/teacher settings make it easy to toggle on/off the games, or turn on a timer if you like. We especially liked the ability to fine tune the difficulty level to individual children. For example, you can turn off the zero in the number line. There are 12 languages - English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Swedish, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian and Korean.

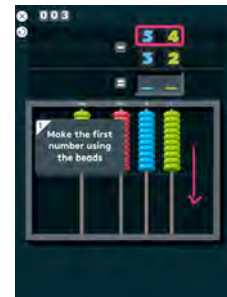
It is extremely strong in terms of pedagogy and math theory, making it a useful teaching tool, say, to help a child discover units of ten. It is the second in a series. See also Montessori Math: 1st Operations.

Details: Les Trois Elles Interactive, <http://lestroiselles.com/en>. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 6-9. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 4.3 or later). Teaches/Purpose: math, addition, subtract, multiplication with numerals up to 1,000. . Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 7/23/2013. [WB]

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



Ease of Use	8	86%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	10	





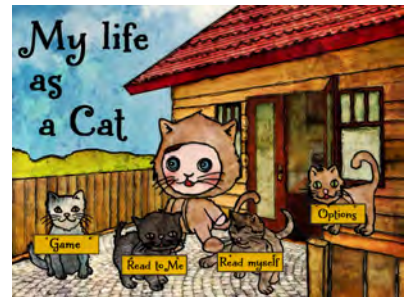
My Life as a Cat

Combining an interactive story with a rather crude phonics matching activity, this app introduces us to a little girl named Samantha, who imagines how her life would be if she were a cat.

She figures out that it wouldn't be all that fun. She could no longer take a bath, and would have to lick herself instead. The app features original artwork; endlessly looping music that can be muted, and two language options -- English and Spanish. It's a nice story, with limited production value and interactivity.

Details: Ludo Interactive Media, <http://ludointeractivemedia.com/>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, Kindle. Teaches/Purpose: reading, spelling, letter recognition. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.8 stars. Entry date: 2/26/2013. [WB]

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



My Little Pony - A Canterlot Wedding HD

This is a 20 screen ebook with limited activities that follows a tried and true, but rather tired, plot: (*spoiler alert*) there's going to be a royal wedding, and the My Little Pony gang must prepare.

The navigation is interesting -- using sliding panels instead of pages, with a page turn sound for the transition. Navigation from one page to the next is easy and a ribbon menu makes it easy to jump around in the the story. There are no hot spots and interaction is minimal except for the page turns and about six opportunities to participate in wedding-prep tasks.

Text scaffolding is minimal: one paragraph of text on each page is narrated in a clear voice -- there are no touch and hear elements.

As you work through the story, you help the ponies by completing tasks that include making cookies, decorating a cake, designing an outfit or making a song. Unfortunately the things you make never make their way back into the story. For example, the cake you decorate has a different design in the final ceremony; a missed opportunity for pulling the child's play into the story. All in all, if you like the My Little Pony characters, you'll probably like swiping through this app a few times. There are no in-app purchases. Created for Egmont Kids Media by one2tribe.

Details: Egmont, www.egmontapps.com. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.7 stars. Entry date: 7/25/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	74%
Educational	7	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	6	
Good Value	8	



NameGames

Designed to let babies and toddlers control your iPad's screen, NameGames (formerly called Pictoo's NameGames) is a mash-up between a photo album and a busy box. When a baby -- either accidentally or intentionally -- touches a bubble on the screen with your face, he or she will hear a prerecorded message. The free version lets you store just two profiles, encouraging you to upgrade. There are two activities. Bouncing Faces turns your profiles into floating bubbles. A child can pop the bubble to hear the message or touch the background change the scene. Where Am I? is more structured, asking children to touch the profile that matches the recorded sound. Three correct answers earns an 'I Know' bow.

Strengths include a well done tutorial, to guide you through the setup. We found the camera and voice recording to be easy to use. Weaknesses include no control over the background music, and the background visuals are "kinda cheesy."

Being able to turn your own images and sounds into an app that is high in child control makes this app noteworthy.

Details: Name Games LLC, www.pictoonsnamegames.com. Price: \$free, \$3.99 for full version. Ages: 8 Months - up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: language, causality. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 2/19/2013. [WB]

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





Peppa Pig Happy Mrs. Chicken


Solid, fun and simple, this collection of six no-fail games features Peppa Pig and his animated animal friends. It is one of several Peppa Pig apps. The art is uncluttered, which lends itself nicely to the multitouch screen. A door icon in the lower right part of the screen makes it easy to escape, just in case you don't like the activity or things get too hard. The more you play, the more stickers you win.

The games include: Jigsaw Puzzles (four puzzles in different sizes – six, nine and twelve pieces); Muddy Puddles (be the first to jump in as many muddy puddles as possible); Happy Mrs. Chicken (based on the Nintendo DS mini-game, this game lets you tap on Mrs. Chicken to cause her to lay eggs, which then hatch. The chicks scurry to either side of the screen); Chicken Coop (sorting different colored chicks to the correct home); Seed and Maze (mark a path through a maze with a set of seeds); and Sticker Book (decorate pages with all the stickers you've earned).

There are some minor glitches. If you turn off the sound some of the narration is also removed. But you can adjust the sound. We didn't try the Android version; but noticed that some people complained about installation problems in the Google Play reviews.

Details: Strawdog Studios Limited, www.strawdogstudios.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad, Android, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: counting, spatial relations, logic, sorting, classification. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 10/14/2013. [WB]

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





Playground 3 - ABC Edition

While a better name for this "playground" might be "drill ground", this collection of six activities is well designed, effectively providing perfectly leveled practice with letter formation and letter-related sounds.

You start by selecting one of the six self-correcting activities from the main menu. The first activity, flashcards, asks you to trace individual letters, from A to Z. Accurate tracing earns stars; going outside the line results in a short "bonk" sound; a technique that invites instant feedback and shapes the child's behavior. An animal illustration helps children name the letter. Later activities ask children to match upper and lower case letters in different fonts, write freehand in six colors, or drag the previously learned letters, similar to a magnetic board, on the sheet. Mistakes can be corrected with an eraser and unnecessary letters can be pulled to the side to remove them. The final "message" can be photographed. It is possible to jump to a harder level, where you write the names of 65 animals using a set of mixed up letters, or can play a game of concentration where you have to match letters with objects. With all the dry exercises, what's to keep a child playing? A rather random, but fun apple tossing game. Features include a parental timer, a choice of different fonts, seven on-the-fly language options including German, English, UK English, French, Spanish, Italian and Swedish. There are no in app sales or questionable business practices in this app.

Details: Spielplatz, www.janessig.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 4-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (Requires iOS 4.3). Teaches/Purpose: alphabet, writing, letter formation, language. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 4/30/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	88%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	6	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	10	






Quick Tap – Spanish

Let's say you only speak English, and you want a fun way to learn 100 common words in Spanish. Here's an option. Part of a series of four apps (one per language), this noisy, fun quiz game turns your iPad into a two player race, to see which player can match common Spanish words the fastest. Content includes 100 words that range from numbers and colors, to food and animals. There are a total of four Quick Tap language titles.

Two players race head to head - on the same iPad - to match Spanish words with their English translations. As each word appears on screen the player that is quicker to hit the match button wins the round. While the app is noisy, it is possible to pause at any time. The first player to win 7 rounds becomes the champ. Content includes different word lists across 10 different topical categories, including numbers, colors, body parts, family members, calendar, time, food, school, the world and animals.

This app is part of the Fingerprint Network of games which offers a curated list of other apps. Besides the link to the store on the main menu and a prompt for push notifications, there is no pressure to purchase additional Fingerprint apps. Drawbacks include the use of an unconventional font, and print that is too small for use on smaller screens. This is not a major problem.

Details: Fingerprint Digital, www.fingerprintplay.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 5-11. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: Spanish. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 10/2/2013. [WB]

Rainbow Sentences

While the interface is less than elegant and the hand drawn sketches are sometimes less than professional, Rainbow Sentences succeeds in giving children learning to read the chance to construct sentences, by thinking of them in terms of their grammatical construction.

The who, what, where, and why parts of sentences are color coded, and must be dragged and dropped into place in order to work. Because children can use the color coding as a crutch, the experience works for introducing parts of speech and grammar. We also liked the way a child can record their own reading of the sentences, save the recordings, and play them back. Detailed records are kept.

Content includes 168 images; each representing a paragraph to build, and detailed teacher options that let you turn on/off the level of support, adjust the level and toggle the voice recording on/off. Teachers will love these features if they are using this app in a one-on-one context. Each set of puzzles earns a puzzle piece, and individual student records can be saved.

Weaknesses include less-than-professional illustrations and a non-standardized interface, with too many steps between problems. All in all, this is a clunky, but handy tool for reading teachers.

Details: Mobile Education Store, www.mobile-educationstore.com. Price: \$7.99. Ages: 4-12. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, grammar, sentence structure, parts of speech. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 9/26/2012. [WB]

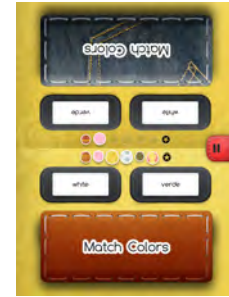
Room on the Broom

Beautiful illustrations and lovely string music make a wonderful first impression, but the shallow games and ever-looping music take away from the stickiness of this set of eight of the mini-activities.

Using a well designed side-scrolling menu that doubles as a progress checker, your mission is to earn stars by completing tasks that feature characters from the book. Most games have a soft educational agenda; involving counting or letter matching, but there are some rough design issues. Testers noted that the find the hidden object puzzles seem random, and the dot-to-dot design activity looks amazing but is confusing at first. The best activity is where you get to fly the broom to spell words; however, this gets tedious after a few minutes. There are no in-app purchases and external links are age-gated. The illustrations are by Axel Scheffler. Developed by Stormcloud Games.

Details: Magic Light Pictures Ltd., . Price: \$4.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: counting, logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 10/9/2013. [WB]

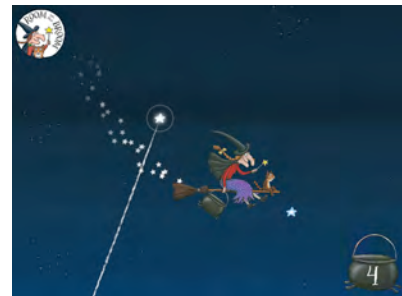
Ease of Use	9	88%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	9	



Ease of Use	7	80%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	5	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	



Ease of Use	9	78%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	6	
Good Value	8	





Rosetta Stone Kids Lingo Letter Sound

Featuring bright and happy (a bit too happy) narration that is rather pushy, Rosetta Stone Lingo Letter Sounds is a free app that contains a nice taste of a what Rosetta Stone hopes will be many future apps. The idea is to solve workbook-like problems to earn toys. You choose from two types of early reading drills, one in English, the other in Spanish. The Spanish-language tutorial is better designed because it asks children to actually say a short phrase in Spanish. This might be "throw harder" (mas fuerte). Your voice is shown in a audio meter on the microphone. Other than showing your volume you get no other specific feedback on how well you pronounced the phrase, however. The English language drill is rather typical -- match letters with objects. The Spanish drill does a better job providing context to the phrases, by way of short animated sketches.

Features include a Parent Corner, kept behind an age gate, where you can monitor a child's progress, providing you register. You can also adjust the pronunciation accuracy and the volume. This app was developed by a new San Francisco and Austin-based product development team.

The app is available for free in the App Store for iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch. People behind the app include West Stringfellow, CPO of Rosetta Stone. <http://www.rosettastone.com/lp/kidsapp/>

Details: Rosetta Stone, www.rosettastone.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: Spanish, early reading, phonics, letters. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 9/17/2013. [WB]

Sago Mini Bug Builder

Ideal as a young child's first app, this no-fail activity lets a child transform a simple shape into a zany bug. You start with a cocoon (or egg) and touch it to help it hatch. You can then choose from eight outline shapes, and make a design using an ultra-simple set of drawing tools. If you like, you can add a hat or legs, feed your bug, and give it a bath. Projects can be saved as photos in your photo gallery as "bugshots." There are no in-app purchases or third-party advertising.

Details: Sago Sago, www.sagosago.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 1.5 to 5. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: causality. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 7/2/2013. [WB]

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



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





Symmetry School: Learning Geometry

Turn your iPad into a self-correcting symmetry puzzle, with this bite sized app that should be of interest to math teachers.

Symmetry School is part of the Spraoi School, a series of educational apps from Ireland designed to support CCSS (Common Core State Standards) math education.

Each app purchased provides access to a supporting Whiteboard version for teachers, and offers supplemental print activities available to download and print out. There's also an 'Email Your Result' feature that could be used for homework. This app covers two types of symmetry: reflective (complete the missing half of a pattern); and rotational symmetry (predict and describe the results of rotating patterns, recognize simple spatial patterns and relationships and make predictions about them). Each type of symmetry offers three difficulty levels: easy, medium and hard. Language options include English, French, German, Irish, Chinese and Spanish. We liked how the pieces clearly display color and shape attributes.

Need to know: there's not much content given the price, compared with other math-related apps, and the puzzle pieces are small, making them hard to pick up when they are in a pile. Also, this app uses a more abstract "tap to rotate" method of turning the pieces. It would be better if the shapes had "handles" that let you more directly manipulate the rotation process. The reinforcements have little to do with the concepts. This app could be very useful for classroom use, displayed on a large screen.

Details: PixelSoup Ltd, www.spraoischool.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 7-14. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math, spatial relations, symmetry, patterns. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 10/4/2013. [WB]

Tap the Cat

Nine sometimes dry early reading activities were designed by a group of educators in Australia. They vary in quality but are effective in providing structured practice with such things as letter/object matching, upper/lower case, rhyming words like dog and log, and letter formation. There are some design limitations, for example the first menu requires reading in order to tell one activity from the next; and the letter tracing is mediocre compared to such apps as Letter School. However, this is one of the few early reading drills that offers a choice of three English accents: US, UK or AU. It is also possible to keep profiles for up to four players. Tap the Cat comes from the makers of Reading Eggs.

Details: Blake eLearning Pty Ltd, <http://readingeggs.com/>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 4-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, counting, coloring. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 1/30/2013. [WB]

Ten In The Bed

Nice illustrations and homemade music are mashed up with limited interactivity in this ten screen ebook. You can help the bears "fall" out of the bed with a swipe. Beginning readers can touch each word to hear it read out loud, although this process is clunky because you can accidentally select the entire block of text. Content is limited -- there is just one bear on each page to touch; although we always like to see a predictable story on an iPad. The app contains a music playing page, with songs about "10" including: Ten In The Bed; Ten Little Bumblebees; Counting To Ten; This Old Man; Ten Little Fish; and Counting by Tens. We didn't like seeing links to iTunes products on the last page.

Details: Twin Sisters Productions, Inc., www.twinsisters.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 1-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: counting, reading, counting to ten, music, base ten. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.7 stars. Entry date: 9/25/2013. [WB]

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



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



Ease of Use	9	74%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	6	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	7	





Toca Cars

Unlike typical driving simulations, where you tilt the controller left or right to act like a steering wheel, the Toca Boca treatment takes a different approach. The cars follow your finger, which makes them hard to control, but it also adds to the fun; because you bump into the cardboard props.

The result is a compelling fine motor experience that's easy to start fooling around with, and that you find yourself still playing an hour later. You simply have to see if you can line your car up on one of the four types of jumping ramps, to see if can land on all four wheels. You rarely do. There's a lot of crashing and planned chaos; helped along by a "reset" key that instantly restores order. This "undo" feature is powerful, adding reversibility to the experience. This increases engagement.

After you choose from two possible cars, you can try one of two modes of play, one with a pre-constructed village that you can freely explore, the other with a "make your own" environment, where you're given 23 building elements to arrange as you like. When it's time to drive, you can spin out in puddles of colored ice cream, leaving a design, or fly off jumps into a lake.

As you might expect, Toca Boca has also built in fun surprises such as a dog that chases your car, or a robot who tries to tip you over. There are no rules and lots of possibilities. Testers wanted a larger area to explore (the driving area seems similar to the area found in Toca Builders) and found the cars less than easy to control. This is the 13th Toca Boca App we've reviewed; and it is one of the most innovative. It's nice to see that Toca Boca's irreverence is just as strong as ever.

Details: Toca Boca, <http://tocaboca.com/>. Price: \$.99. Ages: 3-9. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, some creativity. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 9/12/2013. [WB]

Ugglis, The: Your Gross Best Friend

Ugglis (\$30, www.moosetoys.com) are rubbery-faced electronic puppets. You put your hand inside the head, just like a regular puppet, and open or close the mouth to activate one of 30 "gross" noises, played through an internal speaker. There is also a "warp" dial on the collar which modulates the pitch up or down. We would have liked the puppet to be a bit more subtle for more effect, and the sounds to be better linked to your hand motions. In addition, it's not always easy to control the sounds, and the puppet doesn't fit all sized hands. Includes one Ugglis Puppet and 1 Ugg-doption Certificate. Requires 3 AAA batteries (included).

Details: Moose Toys Pty Ltd., www.moosetoys.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: bodily noises. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.8 stars. Entry date: 9/20/2013. [WB]

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

90%



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

75%





Future Releases & Updates

OCTOBER 2013

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.

Bubble Pop!: Interactive Math Challenge

Designed for computers (Macs and Windows) this game lets students race to solve math problems in four different categories by popping bubbles that show the correct answers, before they splash into the pond. Start by choosing a category and subskill from the menu, then pop the correct bubbles to earn points. There are eight levels; with each level you unlock, the challenge increases. Teachers can create and save a profile for each student, allowing students to start and stop when they want.

Other features include printable assessments and personalized reports. Prices are \$19.99 for a Single License CD-ROM or Single License Instant Download for use on one computer, \$49.99 for a Class License CD-ROM for use on up to five computers, and \$199 for a Site License CD-ROM for use on all on-site computers. See also Place Value: Quick Shot! and Phonics Quiz: Game Show.

Details: Lakeshore Learning Materials, www.lakeshorelearning.com. Price: \$19.99. Ages: 8-9. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: math, multiplication, division, drill. Entry date: 2/21/2013.



Pop the correct answer.

Can Do! Reading Game Show: Phonemic Awareness

This software, for Mac or Windows CD-ROM, lets children compete as contestants on a game show, and is designed to help them master phonemic awareness. The animated show features "level appropriate" questions in three categories, including beginning, middle and ending sounds. Players spin the wheel to select a category, answer the question to earn points, then unleash a surprise on their competition, for example, sling pies in their faces. Other features include a robot host who provides instant feedback for each answer, and printable assessments.

Prices are \$14.99 for a Single License CD-ROM or Single License Instant Download for use on one computer, \$39.99 for a Class License CD-ROM for use on up to five computers, and \$149 for a Site License CD-ROM for use on all onsite computers.

Details: Lakeshore Learning Materials, www.lakeshorelearning.com. Price: \$14.99. Ages: 6-7. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: phonics. Entry date: 2/21/2013.



Step 2: Choose an answer

Can Do! Science Game Show: Solar System

This software, for Mac or Windows on CD-ROM, lets children compete as contestants on a mad scientist's game show, and is designed to help them learn about the solar system. The animated show features "level appropriate" questions in three categories, including: planets and moons; asteroids, comets, and meteors; and the sun. Teams take turns spinning the wheel to choose a category and then answer a question to win points for their team. Each correct answer unleashes a surprise on the competition, for example, a zap by the Super Shrinker or a visit from the Slime Monster. Other features include a personalized score report, printable pre- and post-assessment to track student's skills, and 100 skill-building questions. Prices are \$14.99 for a Single License CD-ROM or Single License Instant Download for use on one computer, \$39.99 for a Class License CD-ROM for use on up to five computers, and \$149 for a Site License CD-ROM for use on all onsite computers.

Details: Lakeshore Learning Materials, www.lakeshorelearning.com. Price: \$14.99. Ages: 8-9. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: solar system, planets. Entry date: 2/21/2013.



Our software works on computers!



Colors!

Colors! uses the iPhone's camera to let children find colors. You point your device at an object and the app speaks the color in different languages including English, Arabic, Bokmål, Norwegian, Catalan, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish. You can choose a color, and once that color is found the app will automatically announce it in different languages. The app features several game levels starting with two basic colors.

It can also operate in a 'color tag' mode - the app chooses a color and the kids need to find it within a time limit.

Details: MedAppFactory, <http://colorsapp.wordpress.com/>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: . Entry date: 3/5/2013.

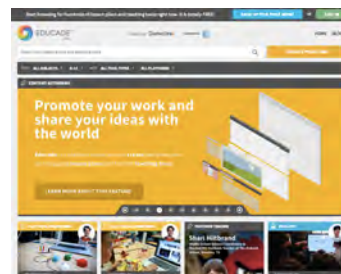


Educade

Designed by Gamedesk of Santa Monica, CA, with funding by AT&T and the Gates Foundation, Educade (\$free, <http://educade.org>) is an online database of digital resources designed to help educators get ideas.

You can search by grade level, subject area or technology type. Entries are written by teachers or, in some cases, app developers themselves. Many of the StoryBots apps have been listed, with copy that was written by StoryBots. This obviously compromises the objectivity of the entry. It is possible to comment on any entry. We noticed some excellent lesson plans, plus tagging for the common core standards.

Details: Gamedesk, www.educade.org. Price: \$free. Ages: NA. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: A portal for educators. Entry date: 10/4/2013.



Nintendo 2DS

If you read between the press releases, you can deduce that Nintendo has high hopes for the affordable Nintendo 2DS (\$130, Nintendo of America) this holiday season. Unlike the regular Nintendo DS or DSi, the 2DS can run 3DS titles, with the graphics shown in non-3D mode. Looking back 48 months, we now can see that Nintendo painted themselves into a corner with the expensive battery burning 3DS technology, especially in light of the flood of smart phones and apps. Many of our testers like the 3D graphics — for the first 10 minutes. But they turn them off to save batteries, or they simply find them annoying.

The 2DS is both powerful and affordable. Remember — you can use it to play all the 3DS titles (obviously in 2D). Think of the 2DS as a Swiss Army Knife for all of Nintendo's DS software.

Need to know: If you already own a 3DS don't bother. The size is less pocket friendly, and the screen and controls are exposed, which could be a problem if it is dropped or chewed on by a dog. Nintendo also sells a carrying bag as a remedy. The 2DS uses the same-sized stylus as the Nintendo DS.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$130. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS, 2DS. Teaches/Purpose: a mobile gaming system. Entry date: 10/15/2013.



Phonics Quiz: Game Show

This CD-ROM (remember those) based game turns your Mac or Windows computer into a game show with 200 questions in 12 categories, including beginning and ending sounds, and blends and digraphs.

Designed for classroom use, the game lets children divide into teams, then select a category. Features include an animated host, sound effects that let students know if they have the right answer, and a timer option. Prices are \$19.99 for a Single License CD-ROM or Single License Instant Download for use on one computer, \$49.99 for a Class License CD-ROM for use on up to five computers, and \$199 for a Site License CD-ROM for use on all on-site computers. See also Bubble Pop!: Interactive Math Challenge and Place Value: Quick Shot!

Details: Lakeshore Learning Materials, www.lakeshorelearning.com. Price: \$19.99. Ages: 6-7. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: phonics, reading, language arts. Entry date: 2/21/2013.





Place Value: Quick Shot!

This CD-ROM (remember those) based game for Mac or Windows is an arcade style game that combines math drill with a basketball metaphor. You must solve two and three digit place value problems in 60-second rounds, with scores tallied at the end of each round. Answers are recorded on the report. Students can then trade in their tickets for virtual prizes. Teachers can create and save a record for every student in the class. Includes printable assessments and personalized score reports. Prices are \$19.99 for a Single License CD-ROM or Single License Instant Download for use on one computer, \$49.99 for a Class License CD-ROM for use on up to five computers, and \$199 for a Site License CD-ROM for use on all on-site computers. See also Bubble Pop!: Interactive Math Challenge and Phonics Quiz: Game Show.

Details: Lakeshore Learning Materials, www.lakeshorelearning.com. Price: \$19.99. Ages: 6-7. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: math, place value, math drill. Entry date: 2/21/2013.



Pokémon X and Pokémon Y

On Oct. 12, 2013, Pokémon X and Pokémon Y will be released for Nintendo 3DS and 2DS systems, with new characters, a new region, and a cloud-based storage system that will cost \$5/year. According to the press release:

- Three new Pokémon will be presented at the beginning of the game – the Grass-type Chespin, Fire-type Fennekin and Water-type Froakie
- Pokémon X presents "the majestic and mysterious Xerneas"
- Pokémon Y "features the strong and powerful Yveltal."
- Players will also be given the choice to receive Bulbasaur, Charmander or Squirtle – classic Pokémon from the first games in the series, Pokémon Red Version and Pokémon Blue Version.
- Pokémon X and Pokémon Y also introduce the Fairy type, the first new Pokémon type since Pokémon Gold and Pokémon Silver.
- The battle system in Pokémon X and Pokémon Y offers new moves, a dynamic camera rotates around the battle, "Horde Encounters" pits the player and a single Pokémon against multiple wild Pokémon.
- The main playable male or female Trainer can be customized with clothes, accessories and haircuts and can roller skate for faster movement.
- Pokémon-Amie is a new mode in which players can pet, feed and play games with individual Pokémon using the touch screen on the Nintendo 3DS system. By interacting with their Pokémon, players can bond with them, which will result in higher performance in battles.
- A "Player Search System" (PSS) makes it possible to find other players online.
- Pokémon Bank is a Nintendo 3DS application and service that lets players store up to 3,000 Pokémon for a \$5 annual fee.
- Poké Transporter is a companion application to Pokémon Bank that allows players to transfer Pokémon from Pokémon Black Version, Pokémon White Version, Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2 to Pokémon Bank, thereby making them available to use in Pokémon X and Pokémon Y. Both Pokémon Bank and Poké Transporter will launch in the Nintendo eShop on Dec. 27.
- Two special edition Nintendo 3DS XL systems will be themed after Pokémon X and Pokémon Y for \$199.99. Remember that Nintendo 3DS and Nintendo 2DS feature parental controls that let adults manage the content their children can access. For more information about this and other features, visit <http://www.nintendo.com/3ds>. View the news release online, at <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20131008005755/en>. People in the release: Scott Moffitt, Nintendo of America's executive vice president of Sales & Marketing.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Nintendo DS, Nintendo DSi, Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: reading, classification, memory. Entry date: 10/8/2013.





Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 Kids

Coming to the USA from Korea "Fall 2013", the Samsung GALAXY Tab 3 Kids (\$TBD), a 7 inch, 1.2 GHz, Android 4.1 tablet with 8 GB of internal memory plus a micro SD slot, for up to 32 GB of additional storage.

The tablet will have front and rear cameras (rear is 3-megapixel, front 1.3 megapixel), and will come preloaded with "preselected apps," plus parental features and just about everything Google - Google Mobile Services, Google Search, Gmail, Google Plus, YouTube, Google Talk, Google Maps.

The most interesting feature many be the combination of access to both the Google Play Store and a new store called Samsung Apps / Kid's Store, where you can purchase Android content. Memo to children's app developers -- start tuning up your Android apps. So the good news about this tablet is that it appears to have a lot of content pipelines.

Other features include WiFi, Bluetooth, and a USB port. Pre-loaded content includes educational games, ebooks and a parental feature called the Application Manager, with such features as a timer and the ability to choose which apps your child can play. When the designated use time is up, a password protected lock screen appears, requiring a parent or adult to enter the password to unlock the device. This tool will help parents ensure the time their children spend on smart devices is balanced.

Peripherals will include a kids case with a grip, stylus and multiple stand options. The tablet will be available in Korea in early September and subsequently available across China, Europe, U.S., Africa, South America and South East Asia. The person overseeing the tablet is JK Shin, CEO and Head of IT & Mobile Communication at Samsung Electronics. The tablet was announced globally on August 27, 2013. See

<http://www.samsungmobilepress.com/2013/08/27/Samsung-Makes-Learning-Fun-with-GALAXY-Tab-3-Kids-1>.

Details: Samsung, www.samsung.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Android. Teaches/Purpose: an Android tablet for kids. Entry date: 8/29/2013.

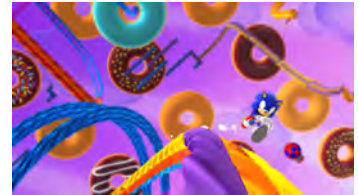


Sonic Lost World

Fast and fun, this racing game is best for two players, either racing competitively against one another, or cooperatively on the Wii U. In the game Dr. Eggman has harnessed the power of six menacing creatures (the Deadly Six). Sonic must take them on head-to-head, using new moves and color powers to speed through the game. Sonic can vault over obstacles, free run up and along walls, and sky dive between islands at lightning speed. The Color Powers let Sonic fly through the air and explode into enemies. You can race friends in the high speed multiplayer races.

Exclusive to the Wii U are tilt, touch and aim. You can race against a friend as you play on the GamePad screen and they play on the TV. The 3DS is billed as the "first handheld Sonic game ever to feature fully realized Nintendo 3D levels." It is possible to share your gadgets between the Wii U and Nintendo 3DS versions.

Details: Sega of America, Inc., www.sega.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 9-up. Platform: Wii U, Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: temporal relations, spatial relations, timing logic, maps. Entry date: 6/12/2013.



SoundSelf

SoundSelf is described as a "chanting game of sensory exploration" that involves a 3D mask and the use of your voice to drive the moving patterns that you see. The idea is that you gradually "fall through" moving tunnels-of-light and put yourself into a meditative trance. In theory anyway. The game was originally called "Deep Sea" in 2010.

We played SoundSelf at E3 2013 in the Indiecade, and found it to be "a rather strange experience." Perhaps it was the noise of the show, or our relatively short exposure (two of us tried it). But it was hard to know if the game was delivering the goods. According to designer Robin Arnott, kids get the idea faster than adults. The game must be used with some sort of 3D view device. We used a Oculus Rift, which fits onto your face like a diving mask. SoundSelf works with any microphone; no musical experience is necessary.

Details: Robin Arnott, <http://soundselfgame.com>. Price: \$15. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Mac OSx, Windows. Teaches/Purpose: pitch, music, 3D graphics. Entry date: 9/16/2013.





Transformers Rescue Bots Beam Box Game System

Out this month, a Skylander-inspired set of collectables combined with a battery operated infrared controller and beaming unit that works with a standard TV by way of old fashioned composite video and audio inputs. So the first thing to note: this game does not use HD graphics, and the software component is limited, compared to a rich game like Skylanders.

After you put in the batteries and plug the plastic beaming unit into your TV, you hear a voice say "reporting for duty!"

You put the figure inside the elevator-like unit and close the gate to 'transport' the figure onto the television screen, where you can play in either robot or vehicle modes. The starter kit includes an Optimus Prime figure; additional figures are sold separately. See the CTR toy fair demo at <http://youtu.be/sMwjBrW01E>

Details: Hasbro, Inc., www.hasbro.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 3-7. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: pretend play. Entry date: 2/23/2013.



ustyme

Over the river and through the woods won't be necessary to get to Grandma's house, according to the press materials for ustyme. Created by a Grandmother (Linda Salesky) to share games and stories with her grandson, ustyme (www.ustyme.com, \$free plus in-app sales) includes six games and two books to prime the pump. Additional books cost \$1 each.

Described as a "free video-call app for iPad", the app creates shared experiences. The idea is to create an app that brings content directly into the call. Stories include "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," and "Henny Penny" in addition to games like Checkers, Chess and Four-in-a-Row.

Registration through Facebook Connect, Google or the app itself is required; and family members must also download the app and respond to a friend request. Once registered, a new user's library is automatically populated with two books ("Three Little Pigs" and "Old MacDonald") and six games (such as Rock-Paper-Scissors). Once signed in, users are able to call each other, select the content of their choice and begin interacting directly within the book or game, while seeing and talking to each other during the video call.

Details: ustyme, www.ustyme.com. Price: . Ages: NA. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: a social media utility. Entry date: 10/2/2013.

