



Children's TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

Choosing an iPad
Stylus for Children

2013 Mobile Devices
for Children: Why
Apple Still Rules

Dutch Treats: A Taste
of Cinekid's Medialab

LittleClickers: Money

Vicky Rideout's Latest
Survey

Curious children explore the teeth on a dinosaur model located outside the Cinekid Medialab, in Amsterdam

CTR, November 2013
Vol. 21, No 11, Issue 164

ABC Actions*
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Build and Play 3D - Rockets,
Helicopters, Submarines
and More
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Discover Paris
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Haunted House Activity
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Motion Math: Match
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Sparky's Birthday Surprise*

Stride and Preudice
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Tiggly Shapes
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Wii Party U*

* Denotes an "Editor's Choice."
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Welcome to the 164th monthly issue of *Children's Technology Review*. This month, I'm taking you to Chicago to talk about touch screen stylus selection, Holland for a peak inside Medialab, and back home to discuss the latest "Zero to Seven" report and to offer some advice on the 2013 crop of tablets for children.

Choosing a Mobile Device for a Child This Fall

They're coming.... A slew of pocket-sized devices that want very badly to be in your child's pocket. Which makes the most sense?

Since last year at this time, I can tell you that there are at least five more Android-based options in the \$150 range and they run smoother and offer more apps than last year. Do they compete with Apple's iOS? Not yet. Apple hasn't been sitting still since last year, piling even more apps inside a better organized kid's section in iTunes. In addition, more of the Apple children's apps do a better job with such things as firewalls to keep children away from purchases. Let's start by putting them into four categories: (1) Apple iOS, (2) Android & Kindle, (3) Toy centric (4) Video Game centric. Each has strengths and weaknesses to consider.

- **The iPad Remains the Best Choice.** Once again, it makes the most sense to pick an Apple, which remains the easiest to buy and use, but most importantly has hundreds of times the quality of children's content than any competitor. If you're buying new, the best dollar/content ratio device is the 16 GB non-retina display **iPad mini** (\$300) inside one of the many foam cases, like the **GripCase** (\$40, www.grip-case.com). This model has the latest camera and connectors and will run all iPad apps. I don't see \$200 worth of difference in the screen quality between the old mini and the retina version.

- **The Kindle Fire 7 inch HD** (\$140 from Amazon) option also offers an improving price vs. software access option, considering it gives your child a direct link to Amazon's vast ocean of books and movies by way of a subscription feature called **Kindle FreeTime Unlimited** (\$5/month) at <http://amzn.to/181Q7Dv>; a feature where you can freely download and use 210 Android apps, 353 videos and 1000 books (as of this month). App choice still lags far behind Apple options although the Kindle reminds us that tablets can be used for videos and books.

- **Android-based options** are even more plentiful this year and quality varies widely. The best option is one with access to the growing Google Play app store but most brands I've reviewed this year tend to be clunky and come with a salesman (or saleswoman) in their soul. At their best, they can deliver children's content responsively and responsibly from a mainstream app store, where competitive forces keep prices in check. See, for example, the 16 GB 7 inch Nexus 7 (\$220, <http://www.google.com/nexus/7>). At their worst, they offer collections of mid-quality, ad-laden apps inside a device with weak batteries. They're more akin to 21st century catalog that tries to keep your child in their gated community to sell more content. We'll review each individually, but currently I can't recommend any, given the options above.

Kindle FreeTime Unlimited
Featured New Titles (142)
Sesame Street (29)
PBS Kids (41)
Nickelodeon (211)
Disney (103)
Houghton Mifflin (38)
Kindle Books (1,001)
Amazon Instant Video (353)
Android Apps (210)



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5 sites & ten videos about

Money

The US Mint calls money “history in your pocket.” It’s true. Every bill or coin tells a story by showing an important figure, or perhaps one of the 50 states. Let’s give you a money quiz.

1. The color green is associated with money. Are dollars printed with green ink?

Not anymore. At <http://to.pbs.org/1ai7uQk> you can learn all about the special paper, and multiple colors of ink used to make the latest bills. You can explore some of the other hidden ingredients, such as micro-printing that makes bills harder to copy.



2. T/F Some new bills are in 3D. At <http://cnn-mon.ie/16QnBnS> CNN explores the new \$100 bill with all sorts of technology, including a 3-D security ribbon and color-shifting ink that changes from copper to green when the bill is tilted. At the Federal Reserve we found an interactive bill <http://1.usa.gov/HrWOlv> that lets you explore the new features.

3. Oh no, my dog chewed up my \$5.00 bill. Is it still good? Yes as long as you have more than half (51%). Just take it to a bank and they may give you a new one. Visit 1.usa.gov/18H2rsi to learn the rules.

4. What is the most valuable United States coin? Go to <http://aol.it/17vI2g6> to see a 1849 solid gold Double Eagle. The \$20 coin is now worth \$20 million!



5. I want to start a state quarter collection. At 1.usa.gov/18Kle63 you can learn about the US Mint's 50 State Quarters Program. Each quarter was produced for only 10 weeks, and will never be produced again.

DID YOU KNOW: The US Mint uses a standard washer and dryer to make coins clean and shiny.

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START A COIN COLLECTION

See a penny on the ground? Pick it up! Next, you need a “coin folder” that contains round cutouts for each year.

They cost about \$4 (or 400 pennies) and are sold in stores like Whitman publishing <http://bitly.com/17C7kXB>

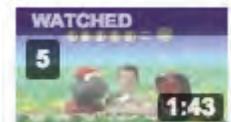
QUARTER MAP (\$9 from Amazon.com) <http://amzn.to/1aPcfVV>



Money videos

Here's our YouTube videos for this month

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcBVHzUUEKwlvEZuNJPANT9z61rHhI_B



Interact with this page online, at <http://www.LittleClickers.com/money>

November '13 Editor's Choice



Here are summaries of the 9 highest rated products from this month's batch of reviews.

ABC Actions, \$2.99, by Peapod Labs
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/abc-actions/id715396289?mt=8>. We always love a new Peapod Labs title. This one contains fifty common action words -- in English or Spanish that are illustrated by way of 150 clear, authentic open source photos and 100 videos from YouTube. This is an easy-to-use, richly illustrated language experience that can gently introduce either English or Spanish vocabulary. Features include the ability to toggle between Spanish or English on the fly and a control panel that lets you switch between upper or lower case letters. For ages 3-8.

Grandma Loves Bugs, \$.99, by FairLady Media, Inc. <http://fairladymedia.com/products/grandma-loves-bugs/> is the latest edition in the "Grandma" apps series, with ten fast-paced, generally well designed mini-quizzes that playfully introduce school readiness skills, with a tiny pinch of entomology (the study of insects). Need to know -- there's a dose of Grandma stereotyping (white older woman with a sense of humor). In addition, Grandma's prompts, that happen if you don't do anything, can get repetitive. For ages 4-8.



Haunted House Activity Book, \$1.99, by StoryToys
http://bit.ly/HH_it turns your child's iPad or iPhone into a haunted house. It's one of the best Halloween apps we've reviewed. Like other StoryToys apps, you swipe through the adventure by turning eight 3D pages that unfold like a pop-up book. This is the second app this month from StoryToys. See also Goodnight Mo, (http://bit.ly/GM_itu). For ages 3-8.

Motion Math: Match, \$2.99, by Motion Math Games
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/motion-math-match/id690085518?mt=8&ls=1> Here's a fresh, multi-touch approach to the age-old task of practicing your math facts that

could only be done in a multi-touch learning environment. There is no game or story aspect to this app, so it could become rather dry. However the straightforward approach, combined with the innovative way to "touch" the different sums makes this app a unique contribution to technology based math pedagogy. For ages 5-12.

Quick Math+, \$1.99, by Shiny Things
<https://itunes.apple.com/app/quick-math+/id703287370?ls=1&mt=8> turns your iPad's screen into a magic, smart slate where you can draw answers to math problems. Featuring multi-levels, a social leader board, and a classroom friendly interface. This is the sequel to Quick Math. This app uses MyScript by Vision Objects <http://www.visionobjects.com>. See the app in action at <http://youtu.be/nCCiW2cUvmg>. For ages 10-up.

Shiny Picnic, \$1.99, by Shiny Things
<https://itunes.apple.com/app/jungle-picnic/id550930045?ls=1&mt=8> contains three well-designed activities with limited content that are embedded in a simple story, creating a playful logic and language experience. The games are well designed, providing a context where children can play with one-to-one correspondence, matching, noticing attributes and using a simple grid. Past progress is not remembered in the games, you can't control background music, and the narration has an Australian accent (this app was published by a studio in Australia). For \$1.99 this app is well worth the download. For ages 2-4.

Sparky's Birthday Surprise, \$free, by Cupcake Digital, Inc.
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sparkys-birthday-surprise/id688456828?mt=8> is a free, bilingual (Spanish/English) storybook app that playfully deals with fire safety. Created by Cupcake Digital for the National Fire Protection Association. For ages 3-6.

Todo Telling Time, \$3.99, by LocoMotive Labs
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/todo-telling-time/id666462848?mt=8> is excellent for introducing and reinforcing time telling skills (specifically analog and digital clocks, calendars and general units of time). We liked the way the record keeping feature provides a map of each game and level, giving you an at-a-glance idea which activities a child has played. All in all, this is a must-download app for any early elementary learning environment. For ages 5-8.

Wii Party U, \$50, by Nintendo of America is an excellent four player game that presents new ways of using the Wii U GamePad. In addition to the main games, there are 80 minigames that can be played on your own, without the TV, using the Wii U GamePad only. This game proves that Nintendo is still in the game. For ages 5-up.



Continued from page 2

- Toy based options from Leapfrog and VTech might have a lower entry fee (\$100) but they make less sense this holiday season, given the cost of their software and batteries. With the exception of the **LeapPad Ultra** (\$150 <http://www.leapfrog.com>) battery life and screen quality have stayed the same as last year, and Android options offer better app selection on multi-touch screens.
- Video Game options: The chunky-sized **Nintendo 2DS** (\$130) remains by far the best non-Apple, non-Android option, especially if you like Pokémon. I like how this device offers future access to 3DS software, but past access to hundreds of well designed, gimmick free game cartridges. Nintendo has done little to improve such things as the graphics quality, and it is still routed in a 2004-vintage mono-touch screen grip. But it provides enough exclusive content to merit a purchase.

Choosing an iPad Stylus for Young Children and Supporting Informal Learning at Home

Last month I was in Chicago for the **2nd Annual Tech for the Early Years Conference** at Erikson Institute. I was able to post several talks, including a wonderful exploration of how technology can affect family by Liza Sullivan called “A family Using Technology to Support Informal Learning” (don’t miss it, at http://youtu.be/Qfg_qnw_iC4). I also met Tamera Kaldar, a Developmental Therapist for the Chicago Play Project who convinced me that when it comes to young children, all tablet stylus models are not created equal. In this video <http://youtu.be/DL7dMxXHek4>, she discusses and demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of five types: The Cosmonaut, Stylus Caps, App Crayon, Bamboo Stylus, Nomad FLeX and the Jot Flex <http://youtu.be/DL7dMxXHek4>



TV Viewing is Down, Tablet Use Up

A report called “Zero to Eight Children’s Media Use in America 2013” is Vicky Rideout’s latest in a series of reports commissioned by Common Sense Media. Having followed Vicky’s work for more than a decade, Scott Traylor interviewed Vicky to provide an overview of the key points. The first key finding: Television and video game use is down for children compared to just two years ago. The second; “the tablet is a game changer.” More on page 6, and online at <http://childrenstech.com/blog/archives/13203>.

Dutch Treats: A Look Inside the 2013 Edition of Cinekid’s Medialab

One of the themes at the 2013 Cinekid Festival (www.cinekid.com) was digital landscapes. According to Cinekid’s Director of Programming, Paulien Dresschler “there are more and more connections between the physical and virtual world.” Medialab attempts to “connect the front end with the back end of things” to “help children understand how things are constructed .. how they work and how they can change things.” This general theme of active learning and child empowerment square’s nicely with CTR’s mission of empowering young children with technology. Have a look <http://youtu.be/qbfpCoueCkY>



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

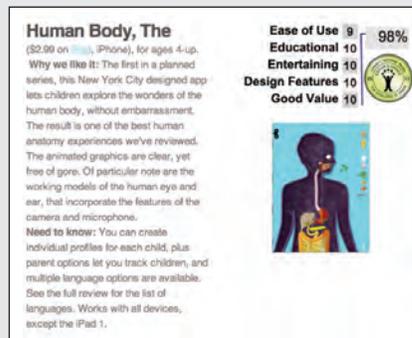
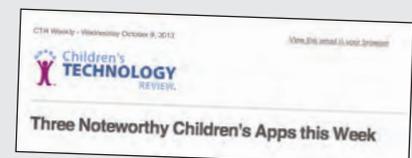
We’re pleased to announce a new weekly email publication, following the success of a weekly format we created originally for Mashable; adapted later for the New York Times, sans ratings.

With this new more timely format, we excerpt our full reviews, which you’ll still get in our review database 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



A Conversation With Vicky Rideout

Summarizing "Zero to Eight Children's Media Use in America 2013"

BY SCOTT TRAYLOR

For those of us that work in children's media, there's nothing like finding a fresh, data filled report.

"Zero to Eight Children's Media Use in America 2013" is Vicky Rideout's latest in a series of reports commissioned by Common Sense Media. Having followed Vicky's work for more than a decade, I asked her for an overview of her findings.

The first key finding is this: **Television and video game use is down** for children compared to just two years ago. (Yes, down, not up!) In addition, **overall screen media use is down** compared to what was recorded just two years ago.

Television viewing in the bedroom is also down by a sizable amount. As with the television and video game drop Vicky says "I'd like to look back on these data points from a future report to see if this is a bump or a trend." This finding does beg some additional questions that cannot be answered through the report, like has there been a drop in the number of televisions owned in the home? Has the drop in television viewing in the bedroom shifted to video viewing on a tablet in the bedroom? Vicky says it is too early to tell if this is a trend.

According to Rideout "Little drops in each platform add up to a half hour of less screen time per day on traditional screens. Then when you add in the increase in mobile use it brings that number down to 20 minutes less screen time per day. While this drop in overall screen time is significant and noteworthy, I'd like to see what the research says in another two years."

There's a lot of material in this report about tablet and related mobile media use. For example, two years ago only 8% of parents owned a tablet. "Today it's 40% and children's tablet ownership is nearly similar to that of their parents from the 2011 report." Years ago handheld video game manufacturers noted that when an older sibling purchased a new handheld gaming device, a younger sibling would ultimately receive the older device. Could the same thing be happening here with parents purchasing a new tablet and giving the children their old one? This report can't answer that question specifically, but one thing is clear: **Tablet ownership by children will increase in the years to come.**

Another key trend: **there is a giant shift in media use**, and **"the tablet is a game changer."** Rideout told me that there is "some computer use among young children, starting as early as four years of age, but because the tablet has simplified the interface so much and made things so intuitive, we see really young children successfully using this platform. If a one or two year old child can turn the pages of a board book, that same child can touch and swipe a tablet. If that child can point to an image on a board book, then that child can launch an app. As a result, a large world of content is made available to these young children. **The floor for how young children use this platform has gone way down compared to other technological innovations, even compared to the Wii, which was a huge leap forward in terms of intuitive use and interface design.**"

In addition Vicky notes: "People keep saying how children are so technologically smart. We have that notion backwards. It's the technology that's become smart, so smart that a kid, or even a baby can use it. This change is also opening up access to content that is not just about passive video watching."

"People keep asking me 'Is this a good thing or a bad thing?' Unless you believe that a screen per se is a bad thing for kids no matter what, I usually respond that this is just a thing, it's just a tablet. The good or bad about a tablet depends on the quality of the content you share with a child through this new medium."

Vicky's comments just begin to scratch the surface of what's included in this new report. However, Vicky also shared she is working on a new report, focused on the same zero to eight demographic, but this time she's writing it for the Joan Ganz Cooney Center. This report will take a deep dive into educational media, eBooks, and joint media engagement (a fancy term for parents who share in the same media experience with their child). The scheduled date of release is January 23, 2014. We look forward to reading more!

Related links:

Zero to Eight: Children's Media Use in America 2013
Common Sense Media
<http://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/research/zero-to-eight-2013.pdf>

Parenting in the Age of Digital Technology - Vicky Rideout interview (2013) 360KID
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-e7CguNzqg>

Parenting in the Age of Digital Technology (2013)
Northwestern University
http://vjrconsulting.squarespace.com/storage/PARENTING_IN_THE_AGE_OF_DIGITAL_TECHNOLOGY.pdf

Vicky Rideout interview - Zero to Eight Children's Media Use Research Overview (2011) 360KID
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAf_SsZE0Ho

Zero to Eight: Children's Media Use in America (2011) Common Sense Media
<http://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/research/zero-to-eightfinal2011.pdf>

Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds (2010) Kaiser Family Foundation
<http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/8010.pdf>

Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Yr-olds (2005) Kaiser Family Foundation
<http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/generation-m-media-in-the-lives-of-8-18-year-olds-report.pdf>

The Effects of Electronic Media on Children Ages Zero to Six: A History of Research (2005)
Kaiser Family Foundation
<http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/the-effects-of-electronic-media-on-children-ages-zero-to-six-a-history-of-research-issue-brief.pdf>

Zero to Six: Electronic Media in the Lives of Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers (2003)
Kaiser Family Foundation
<http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/zero-to-six-electronic-media-in-the-lives-of-infants-toddlers-and-preschoolers-pdf.pdf>

Kids & Media @ The New Millennium (1999) Kaiser Family Foundation
<http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/kids-media-the-new-millennium-report.pdf>

Besides being an avid follower of children's media research, Scott Traylor is President of 360KID (www.360KID.com).



Feature Reviews

NOVEMBER 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.

ABC Actions

Fifty common action words -- in English or Spanish -- come to life through 150 clear, authentic open source photos and 100 videos from YouTube. Note that you need an Internet connection in order to view the YouTube content; when offline, the videos don't play. This is an easy-to-use, richly illustrated language experience that can gently introduce either English or Spanish vocabulary.

Features include the ability to toggle between Spanish or English on the fly and a control panel that lets you switch between upper or lower case letters. You can also "reset" the main menu, which doubles as a bookmarking system that remembers which photos or videos a child has viewed. Because the videos may be removed from YouTube, you need to update this app regularly.

Besides the videos, some of the photos also contain short activities, where you reveal hidden objects, finger painting style. Other Peapod apps with a similar design include ABC Aquarium, ABC Bugs, ABC Farm, ABC Food, ABC Go, ABC Music, ABC House, ABC Wildlife, ABC Christmas, ABC Play, ABC Zooborns.

Details: Peapod Labs, www.peapodlabs.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: language, reading, vocabulary, Spanish. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 10/26/2013. [WB]

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




Bamba Toys

A Toca Boca imitator. The idea is good, especially your ability to put your own voice in your toy. But you don't have enough creative input in the process and the entire experience is multiple choice.

Bamba Toys lets children design their very own toys, from customizing the parts to creating the right packaging. Children choose the blueprint, pick the perfect parts suited to their own personal needs and attach accessories to the toy. Once a completely customized toy has been built, children move on to the packaging area where they need to choose the right box design, add stickers and make the toy ready to be played with. There are also different accessories available for add-on features with animation and sounds. Children can also unbox the toy and place it back on the shelf.

Features include: choose from dozens of toy parts, toy accessories, packaging and stickers, from Astronauts to Rockstars; make a recording in the voicebox, play it back when playing with the toy; decorate the packaging, spell out the name of the toy; assemble the toy with a mini-game; and free updates for new parts and accessories. There are no in-app purchases or external advertising.

Details: Mezmedia, <http://bamba.mezmedia.com/>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad (iOS 5.1 or later). Teaches/Purpose: some creativity. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.2 stars. Entry date: 7/26/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	64%
Educational	5	
Entertaining	6	
Design Features	6	
Good Value	6	





Build and Play 3D - Rockets, Helicopters, Submarines and More

Featuring crisp, clear graphics and a solid design, this is a set of nine puzzles that feel like they snap together. It comes from the Romania-based Croco studio, which has become known for excellent drag and drop experiences for children.

While the building part is solid, the play part is weak. You can build the puzzles, which vary in complexity, which is fun. But it doesn't do anything.

Content includes nine toys: an ATV; Rocket; Tip truck; Tractor; Submarine; Boat; Helicopter; Astronaut; and Car. It is easy to adjust the sound. There are no language features. This is a solid app, but is less than innovative.

Details: Croco Studio, www.crocostudio.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: logic, classification, spatial relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 9/20/2013. [WB]

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



Discover Paris

Good content meets an over talkative owl, in this tour/quiz about the city of Paris. Content includes 12 famous sites, which includes the Notre Dame, Le Louvre and more. Each site is presented, board game style, from a menu that includes purchase links; also some of the locations start with long downloads.

The locations are well selected, and there's a lot of content to find. We liked the real photos and dynamic tools to answer questions, like the measuring tape that you can stretch with your fingers to answer a question about the height of the Eiffel tower. Weaknesses includes some clunky design features (the seed is hard to put away) and an owl that lectures excessively. Rather than letting you discover the wonders of Paris, as the title implies, the owl assumes you don't know anything, and proceeds to tell you about it. Contains in-app sales on the main menu, along with the scary message "your purchase is being processed" (before you enter your iTunes password).

Details: Seven Academy, <http://sevenacademy.com>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 6-14. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: geography, history, France, Paris. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.7 stars. Entry date: 6/26/2013. [WB]

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

Grandma Loves Bugs

This latest edition in the "Grandma" apps series presents ten fast-paced, generally well designed mini-quizzes that playfully introduce school readiness skills, with a tiny pinch of entomology (the study of insects) mixed in. The parent options make it easy to customize this app, by turning on or off the activities.

Content includes ten short activities that present a mix of letter recognition, counting and matching experiences. In between the quizzes, children can watch eight short videos about bugs, or explore a high resolution bug picture with a magnifying glass. Most of the games follow a tried-and-true multiple choice format that's not very innovative. In addition, most of the bugs are hand drawn in a less-than-realistic manner.

For some fun, informal exposure to bugs and bug-related vocabulary such as mosquito, antenna, and abdomen in the context of school skills, this is an excellent app.

Need to know -- there's a dose of Grandma stereotyping (white older woman with a sense of humor). In addition, Grandma's prompts, that happen if you don't do anything, can get repetitive.

Details: FairLady Media, Inc., <http://fairladymedia.com>. Price: \$.99. Ages: 4-8. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math, reading, logic, insects. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 10/20/2013. [WB]

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





Haunted House Activity Book

Turn your child's iPad or iPhone into a haunted house, with one of the best Halloween apps we've reviewed. Like other StoryToys apps, you swipe through the adventure by turning eight 3D pages that unfold like a pop-up book. Don't think of this app in terms of pages, however because each screen can unfold in different ways, integrating some sort of challenge. You might find yourself searching for hidden pumpkins, trying to hit ghosts from a ghost train, or mixing magic potions. Correct responses earn badges. Strengths include excellent graphics and sounds that are cartoonish enough to be fun, yet sufficiently edgy to make it just creepy enough. This app makes a nice treat for Halloween, and you don't have to worry about too much candy. Note that this is the second app this month from StoryToys. See also Goodnight Mo, (http://bit.ly/GM_itu). Note that this app offers two in-app add-ons -- a sticker book where you can decorate your own pages, and a set of jigsaw puzzles. Both are available as an in-app sale, and cost \$1.99 each.

Details: StoryToys, www.storytoys.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: logic, vocabulary, memory, spatial relations (Friench, German and Spanish). Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 10/21/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	90%
Educational	7	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	9	




InfiniScroll

One of the more innovative apps we've reviewed this year, this is a multiple-choice style monster maker. But instead of turning pages, you scroll up or down creating a skyscraper like creature with five interlocking sections. This is a refreshing navigation technique that makes this app worth a second look. But know that the limitations include a narrow bandwidth of types of art to choose from. It is not possible to draw your own segments. In addition, you can't edit your creature on the fly. To change a section, you have to visit a screen that looks like a "help" screen (reading required) and touch (rather than swipe) a section of monster. We liked how easy it is to record your own voice. This could be a good prop to get a child talking. Created by Curious Hat, based on art by Francesco Chiacchio.

Details: Curious Hat, www.curioushat.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, verbal skills. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 8/22/2013. [WB]

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



Loopy Lost His Lettuce

And the award for the best needlework art in an app goes to... Loopy and the Lost Lettuce, hands down. That's the good news... the bad news is that the story, interactivity and games are low quality. In the story, you help Loopy the Snail try to find his lost head of lettuce. You tilt the screen to make Loopy move right or left or touch butterflies to capture as many as you can. The story was written by Nick Fettke and Gem Aitchison; you can see samples of the beautiful needlework at www.twizzlez.com. Includes links to online sites on the main menu.

Content includes 30 pages/screens and six games. Other features include: touch, tilt, shake and slide to find different interactive objects; Read to Me and Read by Myself options; Easy, Medium and Hard skill levels; leaderboards; and original soundtrack. See also Woolizoo's Ocean Rescue.

Details: Pixelflip Studios, www.woolizoo.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: vocabulary, reading, language. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.2 stars. Entry date: 10/18/2012. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	64%
Educational	6	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	6	
Good Value	6	





Monster Jewels Halloween

Drag and drop beads, jewels, and parts of necklaces onto seven goofy monsters that look like they've been inspired by a Toca Boca app. In fact, one actually sounds like it says "Toca Boca," which we feel is less than ethical. Judge for yourself, at <http://youtu.be/oMAqzDjPvVg>.

The puzzles are timed and they present a good experience with symmetry and matching, although the jewels are sometimes hard to identify.

In-app purchase options allow you to "unlock and have permanent access" to all the themes and monsters. We tried the free option, and found the theme to be playful. It would be nice to be able to turn off the timer option however, and some of the items that require sorting are hard to see.

See also Build and Play 3D - Planes, Trains, Robots and More and Sort and Stack - Play Smart and Learn. Croco Studio is based on Romania.

Details: Croco Studio, www.crocostudio.com. Price: \$free with in-app sales. Ages: 4-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: symmetry, logic, creativity, matching, patterns. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 10/28/2013. [WB]

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

82%



Motion Math: Match

Here's a fresh, multi-touch approach to the age-old task of practicing your addition, subtraction, multiplication and division math facts. Using a simple grid consisting of math equations, sets or single numerals, you try to simultaneously touch two or three matching sums at the same time. This type of problem solving could only be done in a multi-touch learning environment; making this app especially noteworthy. You soon learn that you can drag one tile onto another to combine their contents, and in some cases you can combine tiles to touch three at the same time. You need to hurry as you work, because some of the tiles gradually disappear. Content includes 35 rewards, with four levels of challenges and faster game play at the harder levels.

Besides unlocking the tiles, there is no game or story aspect to this app, so it could become rather dry. However the straightforward approach, combined with the innovative way to "touch" the different sums makes this app a unique contribution to technology based math pedagogy. We also liked how you can store profiles for different students.

Details: Motion Math Games, www.motionmathgames.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 5-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, math facts, drill. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 9/13/2013. [WB]

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

90%



Ollie the Cat

This first counting experience is almost excellent. It features the illustrations from illustrators Jane Chapman and Tim Warnes that deliver a responsive early counting experience. The ten ebook narrated by a child -- the seven year old son of the authors. In the story, children count by touching times, as they help Ollie the Cat discover bugs, birds and other well selected garden items.

There are both Read to Me and Read by Myself options, selected via a menu that requires reading. To change pages, you need to swipe, despite the fact that you have a Developed by Complete Control and based on a series of concept books previously published by Walker Books.

Details: Chapman & Warnes, www.chapmanandwarnes.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 18 mos. & up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, counting, language. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 9/20/2013. []

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

82%





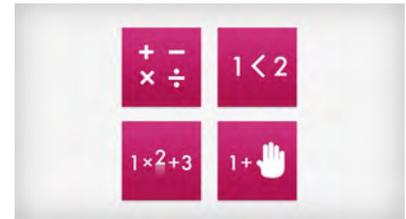
Quick Math+

Your iPad's screen becomes a magic, smart slate where you can draw answers to math problems. Featuring multi-levels, a social leader board, and a classroom friendly interface, this sequel to Quick Math introduces some new game modes that deal with memory and estimation.

The idea is simple -- you race the clock to improve your score, and earn stars to unlock new avatars. There are four modes: Solve - order of operations questions with the inclusion of indices and negative numbers; Memorize - players must remember hidden numbers from one question to the next (which is rather tricky to figure out); Compare - players race to determine greater than, less than or equal to, while developing important estimation skills; and Swap - provides a memory and order of operations challenge as just one number or symbol changes with each question. The difficulty levels provide multiple challenges. This app uses MyScript by Vision Objects <http://www.visionobjects.com>. See the app in action at <http://youtu.be/nCCiW2cUvmg>.

Details: Shiny Things, www.getshinythings.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: arithmetic, memory, logic, estimation. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 10/15/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	93%	
Educational	10		
Entertaining	N		
Design Features	9		
Good Value	9		



Shiny Picnic

Three well designed activities with limited content are embedded in a simple story, creating a playful logic and language experience.

From the main menu, you can choose from two modes: Story and Game.

In the story mode, you follow Charlie the Monkey and his friends as they get ready for a picnic, by gathering food items to put in a picnic basket. The games are well designed, providing a context where children can play with one-to-one correspondence, matching, noticing attributes and using a simple grid. Playing the games earns a sticker, but progress can't be saved or bookmarked. The text has touch-and-hear scaffolding, increasing the literacy value of the experience. It's hard to go wrong with this app. Need to know: Past progress is not remembered in the games, you can't control background music, and the narration has an Australian accent (this app was published by a studio in Australia). All external links are behind a parent gate. For \$1.99 this app is well worth the download.

Details: Shiny Things, www.getshinythings.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-4. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: classification, sorting, logic, reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 10/22/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	86%	
Educational	9		
Entertaining	8		
Design Features	7		
Good Value	10		



Sparky's Birthday Surprise

You can't argue with the price of a free storybook app, especially if you can toggle between two languages (Spanish and English) and the text can be narrated one word at a time. As a result, the app makes a good early reading experience, as well as a way to bring up the topic of fire safety. It would work well in either a home or school setting and is well worth the download.

Developed in partnership with the National Fire Protection Association, the app was designed around the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

In the 19 page story, it's Sparky's birthday, and his friends are throwing a surprise party. Children are introduced to how to know if there's a fire (listen for a smoke alarm) and where to go (to a meeting place). At the end of the story, they get to help Sparky decorate his cake.

The app features three storytelling modes: Just a Book; Read & Play; and Read To Me. The counting, coloring and shape matching activities are solid, but are hardly innovative. Other features of the app include an original sing-along music video, "If the Smoke Alarm Sounds", that lets children sing along with Sparky and his tiny flea friends while learning about what to do when they hear the alarm. Created by Cupcake Digital for the National Fire Protection Association.

Details: Cupcake Digital, Inc., www.cupcakedigital.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android, Nook. Teaches/Purpose: fire safety. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 8/29/2013. [WB]

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





Stride and Prejudice

Can you get to the end of a novel, without losing your mind, or throwing up? We've reviewed some strange apps in our day.... and this one ranks near the top. From the creative mind of designer Carla Fisher (see also Williamspurrrrg) comes another tried-and-true game mechanic, in this case called "endless running," applied in an unusual way.

Instead of running and jumping on ledges, you can read the entire royalty free text of *Pride and Prejudice*, by running and jumping on platforms which are formed from the text of novel.

You play as an 8 bit version of Lizzy (from the book) running in costume. There are several modes, thankfully, including Marathon (see how far you can get from the beginning) and Reader mode, which picks up where you die, so you can read the entire book. A set of preferences let you customize the speed of scrolling and the color scheme, for eye comfort; in addition you can adjust the sound. Testers had strong, mixed reactions to this app. Our two adult subjects (females who like the book) voiced a strong dislike to the format; younger testers found it fun and were soon drawn into the text. Others didn't like the text, or the format, giving up after a few hundreds words.

We wanted the jumping to be more fun (perhaps flips with a double tap) and wanted a responsive sound when you tap the screen. Any teacher knows that presenting text in different formats can sometimes work for particular learning settings. This app just might fit the bill.

Details: No Crusts Interactive LLC, <http://NoCrusts.com>. Price: \$.99. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, temporal relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 11/2/2013. [WB]

Talking Shapes

Carefully scripted, rather didactic phonics instruction is framed in a chapter-book metaphor featuring two sisters who are working together to invent the alphabet. The app could be used as an enrichment curriculum for pre-school or kindergarten children. The rebus (symbols that represent words) icons have been carefully designed despite being hand drawn.

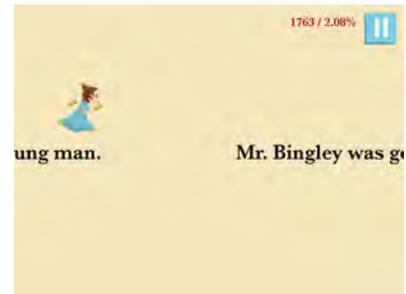
Each story builds on the previous. The version we reviewed contains three of seven planned stories; compared with other early reading apps the content is limited. Other weaknesses noted: while we liked that you could record letter sounds, you can't "see" when it's time to record your voice. Also the letter tracing space seems small, and on one screen children are asked to solve a problem that has two correct answers.

There will be seven stories altogether. The apps were funded by a grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD) and research has been done with these first three stories by Carol Connor of Arizona State University.

Details: Talking Fingers, Inc., www.talkingfingers.com. Price: \$5.99. Ages: 3-5. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, phonics, letter formation. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 10/14/2013. [WB]

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

82%



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

80%





Todo Telling Time

Excellent for introducing and reinforcing time telling skills (specifically analog and digital clocks, calendars and general units of time), Todo Telling Time contains six multi-level exercises that are well leveled for kindergarten through second grade.

Especially noteworthy are the record keeping features, and the use of real time in the main menu. For example, the current (actual) time and date are displayed on the clock and calendar shown on the main menu, along with your work log. The single app covers just about every time-related common core standard, including units of hours and minutes, calendars, analog and digital time, time of the day, and the components of a daily schedule.

The six games include Days and Weeks - children solve puzzles by arranging days and weeks in order; Ferris Wheel - watch as the Ferris wheel cars drop to the ground and put them back in the correct order. This game helps children become familiar with the orientation of the numbers on a clock face, hours and minutes both included as they progress through levels; Schedule - time to brush your teeth, eat lunch and so on. Set the analog clock to the correct time and watch a fun animation that corresponds with that time of the day; Train Time - use the number tiles to set the appropriate time; Memory - children will build short-term memory and sequencing skills as they watch and re-create the numbers in the order they are flashed in this fun cuckoo clock game; and Time Quiz - each level contains a different focus as children put their time telling skills to the test in this multiple choice game.

We liked the way the record keeping feature provides a map of each game and level, giving you an at-a-glance idea which activities a child has played. The only drawback besides the looping music, is that it's not obvious how you the levels are reset, say, for a new child. All in all, this is a must-download app for any early elementary learning environment.

Details: LocoMotive Labs, <http://locomotivelabs.com/>. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 5-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod (Requires iOS 5.1 or later). Teaches/Purpose: telling time, clocks, calendar skills, days of the week, analog and digital time. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 10/28/2013. [WB]

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





Wii Party U

This party game (for 1-4 players) lets you compete using your Mii character in a variety of games. It provides new ways to play with others using the Wii U GamePad. For example, in the Lost-an-Found Square game, you are lost in a playground and must describe your surroundings to the other players based on what you see on the GamePad, in order for the other players to find your location. Content includes 80 minigames that can be played on your own, without the TV, using the Wii U GamePad only.

You can also post your impressions of game sessions to Miiverse, and rate your performance by adding a one to five star ranking after the match is over. includes a Wii Remote Plus controller.

CTR Tester Corey Hahn: Wii U, Wii Party U is an amazing multiplayer and party game involving the Miiverse. You couldn't ask for a better Wii Party game. Gameplay involves House, TV, and GamePad Party modes which have great and somewhat good games for playing. The controls function like the games should in real life such as sports for example. Don't forget about the amazingly fun mini-games. What I really love is the board games and how fun they are. For some of the Wii U Gamepad games, I find it unnecessary to hold the Wii U Gamepad vertically instead of horizontally. I also like how this game plays well either single or multiplayer. This game is flexible.

Graphics look average to great for a Wii U game as comparing it with Wii and Wii U, you can see the latter has HD while Wii doesn't. It is great that this game has the best of both the Wii U GamePad and Wii Remote. The game's graphics and design center around the Miiverse and the characters such as players will look like Mii avatars. I like how Nintendo is able to make the Wii and Wii U unique and what makes Wii Party U amazing is using the Miiverse characters to the fullest, unlike games like Family Party: 30 Great Games Obstacle Arcade .

The conclusion? Wii Party U is a marvelous edition to Wii based family entertainment. The \$50 bundle includes a regular Wii Remote. Developed by NDCUBE Co., Ltd. for Nintendo.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Wii U. Teaches/Purpose: logic, problem solving, social play. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 6/12/2013. [WB]

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





Future Releases & Updates

NOVEMBER 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.

Cosmonaut Stylus for iPad

The Cosmonaut is a thick, weighted, rubbery stylus for capacitive touch screens. It is designed not to feel like a pen. According to the press materials "the perfect tablet stylus is one that feels like a dry erase marker: fast, simple, low fidelity."

The shaft has a comfortable rubber grip that feels great to hold for people of all ages, including children and the elderly. The tip is similar to other stylus brands. The Cosmonaut will work on nearly every capacitive touch screen device, including the iPad and iPhone. We learned about this Stylus from Tamara Kaldor from the Chicago Play Institute at a conference at the Erikson Institute. See the video, at <http://youtu.be/DL7dMxXHek4>.

Details: Studio Neat, www.studioneat.com. Price: \$25. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad, Android, Nook, Kindle. Teaches/Purpose: a stylus for tablets. Entry date: 10/22/2013.



Hometown Story

Designed by the Harvest Moon series creator, Yasuhiro Wada, Hometown Story contains 100 characters that can help you build a shop from a tiny market to a bustling social center.

You've inherited a store from your Grandmother, but it has become run down. Getting the customers back requires selling more items and careful management. You also have the help of a magical sprite named Pochica. The villagers change and grow throughout the game, so each experience is unique. See <http://natsume.com/store/games/3Dhts/index.html>. The collector's edition ships on November 25th; the game is also scheduled to be released digitally via the Nintendo eShop on October 22nd.

Details: Natsume, www.natsume.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic, math, economics, strategy. Entry date: 10/22/2013.



Mech Mice

What happens when passionate geniuses have their own funding? From two of the Club Penguin founders, Lance Priebe and Pascale Audette, comes a new tactical strategy game featuring "a rich storyline and beautiful animation." Their new studio, called Hyper Hippo (www.hyperhippo.ca) has teamed up with Oktobor Animation to create this browser-based world. Like Club Penguin, it will run on old fashioned computers (Macs and PCs), but iOS and Android versions are coming "later this year."

So what is it? A "tactical strategy" game featuring mice that explores the themes of teamwork, courage and sacrifice, in a format that is easy to play but difficult to master.

The first level is free, later levels will be released as episodic chapters. To play, assemble a squad of meched out mice, and lead them into turn-based battles against cybug armies. As you play, you collect digital, playable action figures. More information is at www.mechmice.com; the trailer video is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85qgSYOsGLQ>

Details: Hyper Hippo Productions, www.hyperhippo.ca. Price: \$free. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: . Entry date: 10/16/2013.



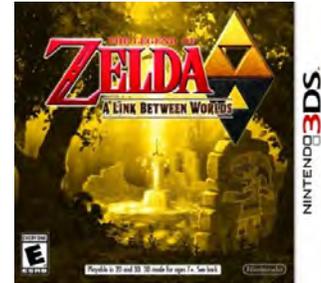
The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds

Coming for die-hard Nintendo fans in time for the holidays -- a recycled edition of Zelda plus some dressed up gold and black hardware, in the form of a Nintendo 3DS XL (\$220, includes a copy of the \$40 Zelda game).

The Legend of Zelda series has always been associated with the color gold. There was the gold-colored cartridge for The Legend of Zelda on NES and the gold box art on the recently released The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker HD for Wii U.

In the game, the gold and black represent the two worlds depicted in The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past that ran on the Super NES. In the story Link must journey between two worlds, Hyrule and Lorule, using a mysterious power that lets him become a drawing on walls. Link's ability to merge with walls allows players to solve puzzles and explore dungeons in a new way. Players are also able to buy or rent various items throughout the game, allowing them to explore dungeons in any order they want, adding a new level of freedom to the game play. More info at <http://zelda.com/link-between-worlds/>.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Nintendo DSi, Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: measuring. Entry date: 10/29/2013.



Tiggly Shapes

Tiggly Shapes is a set of four plastic geometric shapes look like cookie cutters, that are designed to interact with three free learning apps on iPads. The three games include Tiggly Safari - children use Tiggly Shapes to construct animals from the jungle, farm, and sea; Tiggly Stamp - use Tiggly Shapes to build seasonally themed scenes, with voice record and camera options that allow kids and parents to tell stories and save their work; and Tiggly Draw - create art using the tablet as the canvas and Tiggly Shapes as the tools.

With a soft plastic cover and silicon touch points, the four toys (circle, square, triangle, star) in this package are durable enough for toddler play and gentle enough for iPad screens. A felt carrying pouch is also included.

Details: Tiggly, <http://tiggly.com/>. Price: \$30. Ages: 18 mos - 4. Platform: Smart Toy, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: matching, logic. Entry date: 10/24/2013.

