



# Children's TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

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Minding the  
Milliseconds  
of Childhood

## Feeling Superhuman

Why Disney's *Fantasia: Music Evolved*  
sets a new  
standard  
for kinesthetic  
control

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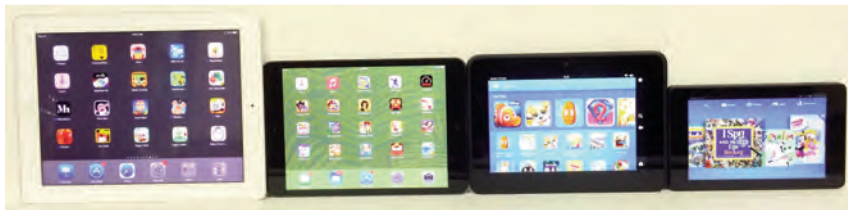
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iPad 3, iPad Mini, Kindle Fire and Fire HD Kids

### Screen Size Matters - More Than You Think

As the world of children's tablets evolves, we're seeing an interesting phenomena -- the software (e.g., apps) is shaping the hardware. That's one of the best explanations for the Amazon's new 6 inch kids tablet.

When you slip off the rubbery protection, you're left with a durable, well-designed video player with a tiny screen. Video content looks great, but some books and apps designed for larger screens don't. In addition, some of the navigation icons are hard to see or find. Oops. Full review of all the new tablets comes next month.

### Motion Sensing Games Improve

Software designed around the new generation motion sensing cameras. Case in point? **Fantasia: Music Evolved**, reviewed on page 9.

### Measuring Magic, in Milli-Seconds

Scott Traylor has a theory that the responsivity of a screen can be linked to a child's engagement. See page four for more details.

### LittleClickers: Recycling

November 15 is "America Recycles Day" to help us think about all the things we normally throw away, that can be reused. See page 3 for some sites and videos on the topic, or visit [www.littleclickers.com/recycling](http://www.littleclickers.com/recycling).

### Coming November 12: CTREX -- a new way to search reviews

We're ready to release our new database, and we wanted you, our subscribers, to know first. See the advance press release on page 5.

*Oops.... Seen on a screen in a first grade public classroom.... complete with an ad that says "Join the NRA: FREE Pocket Knife."*



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Your paid \$59 subscription to *CTR* includes exclusive password access to the *CTREX* 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.



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November 15 is “America Recycles Day” to help us think about all the things that can be reused. Here are some sites and videos on the topic.

**1. What is the most recycled product in the USA?** The answer might surprise you. Take a guess, and then click here <http://bit.ly/1FTIeUa> to see if you were right. Another hint... there’s a picture of it on this page.

**2. What happens to empty soda cans?** At <http://bit.ly/1fBsoyZ> we learned that aluminum -- the stuff that soda cans are made of -- can be used over and over again. In fact, 75 percent of aluminum produced since 1888 is still in use, in one form or another. Wisegeek has a list of some of those uses, at <http://bit.ly/1oBYUHC>

**3. How can I make money recycling?** Visit Alcoa <http://bit.ly/1u4YBtV> for step-by-step instructions on how to recycle aluminum cans. There’s a place where you can type your zip code to find the nearest recycling center.

**4. Can old tires be recycled?** If you wind down a slide in many playgrounds, chances are you’ll land on recycled tires. They are carefully ground up and used to provide a bouncy cushioned surface. Learn more, at <http://1.usa.gov/ZXSI9v>

**5. Where is the world’s largest aluminum recycling plant?** In Germany, you can see a huge factory specifically designed to recycle aluminum. Click here <http://bit.ly/1vi7L0Q> to see what it looks like.

**6. Which countries are best at recycling?** Sadly, the winner is not the USA. Find out at <http://bit.ly/1wJ1vT0> to see a list of the 14 greenest countries, when it comes to recycling. The winner? Switzerland.



### Applications

1. Click here to sign up and take the pledge on America Recycles Day <http://bit.ly/1naSNf5>
2. Start recycling at home in 4 easy steps <http://bit.ly/1lcgJ0u>
3. Find a recycling plant near you <http://bit.ly/1lqw2Ct>
4. Make some useful items from recycled materials at <http://bit.ly/1wbAoAW> and <http://edcate.co/1DsIOEg>



## Megan’s videos about recycling

Here’s a set of hand picked videos from Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcBVHzUUEKwn22y3TW9TvXi0jUbtR9BAo>

Interact with this page online, at <http://littleclickers.com/recycling>

# Minding the **Milliseconds** of Childhood

by Scott Traylor

If we look at the amount of time a child has to enjoy being a child, it works out to something like 6,753 days, or 157,680 hours. Every hour of childhood is important, as is every second. Who knew, but milliseconds seem to matter as well. Engaging a child successfully in an interactive experience can boil down to what happens within a fraction of a second.

While working in the children's interactive industry for many years, there's one question I'm asked more than any other: "What is the single most important thing needed to successfully engage a child in an interactive experience?" In today's world that means successful engagement through tablets and apps, of which there are many things to consider. Engaging characters, compelling stories, a strong game mechanic, lots of user testing, a willingness to change something for the better when developing, an understanding of child development and child related research. But that's not where I start. These are all "must have" components of a successful interactive experience. So what's the one item that will make or break your app? Responsivity.

It's usually at this point the person asking the question says "Huh? What do you mean? Responsivity?" Even if the app includes all the must have items mentioned above, if the app does not respond immediately to a child's request, usually in the form of a tap on a screen, your product is dead. It won't be used. End of story. The time you have to successfully respond to a child's request can be measured in milliseconds.

Let me share a recent article to help crystallize just how little time you have. I'll reference a technology advance outside of the children's industry. There have been some amazing discoveries in the virtual reality space in the last year. You know, those crazy headsets that cover your eyes and ears to deliver an otherworldly experience, be it on Oculus Rift or Morpheus.

The vision of this technology might one day deliver a mind blowing, life changing, "real" experience. Part of recent successes in this industry boil down to this:

- a.) If a user makes a request through the technology (input),
- b.) and the display in front of the person updates as quickly as possible (output),
- c.) the more believable and enjoyable the experience.

However, with a slow update, the user will feel nauseous. Literally. This performance, or latency, can actually be measured. A response time longer than 30 milliseconds will make someone sick.

For years the virtual reality industry has been unable to break a performance speed below 60 milliseconds, and in the process of trying, has made a lot of virtual reality testers sick. The breakthrough in this industry will be when they bring the performance issue down to about 15 milliseconds, which some say is now within reach.

In reaching that goal, virtual reality designers have had to look at everything that causes latency: Computer processing speed, software, cables, accelerometers, display screens,... everything. (See [Wired](http://www.wired.com/2013/12/oculus-rift-2/) for more, at <http://www.wired.com/2013/12/oculus-rift-2/>)

Let's put that in context to an interactive experience for a child. What are the ingredients that make up the response time of an app? Just like the discoveries found with the virtual reality example above, the same components are equally important here. Interactive responsivity can be simmered down to what hard-

ware and software combinations you use.

Let's start with the hardware. We're talking about tablets. Are all tablet technologies created equal? If you look at the responsiveness of just the hardware component of a tablet surface alone, though the differences are small, it appears the response time of a tap is hardly equal across all devices. Have a look at how long a single tap takes to register through the hardware of a tablet:

Apple iPad Mini	75 milliseconds
Apple iPad (4th generation)	81 milliseconds
Microsoft Surface RT	95 milliseconds
Amazon Kindle Fire	114 milliseconds
Samsung Galaxy Tab	168 milliseconds

(Source: <http://www.digitaltimes.com/nexus-7-vs-ipad-mini-vs-surface-rt-touchscreen-benchmarks-reveal-apple-devices-twice-fast-android>)

Okay, no big deal, right? We're talking just a fraction of a second, and we're not even measuring hardware latency from devices specifically targeted to children in toy stores, which by the way use cheaper (AKA slower) chips and tablet surface components.

Now we need to add in latency that is introduced from software. What software tools are being used to create apps for children? Most app-based software tools fall into one of two categories; native apps and non-native apps.

Native apps tend to be written with programming code that is compiled. Compiled code is translated into something a computer can understand at a machine level. Languages like C and C++ are compiled languages that tend to execute quickly.

Non-native apps may be created with a "wrapper", something that can bundle together other kinds of "runtime" code, like JavaScript, HTML, and HTML5. Runtime code is not compiled. Runtime code reads like English, which is great for writing code quickly by humans, but not necessarily the best form to be understood quickly by computers. When this kind of code is executed at runtime, a tablet needs to interpret it, one line at a time, into something it can understand. Translating this runtime code on the fly is time consuming for any computing device, including tablets, and creates latency with a response back to the user.

When a tap or a swipe is sent to a native or non-native app, we're still talking about a fraction of a second for this instruction to execute. However, just to put this in perspective, generally speaking, runtime code can take up to ten times longer to execute than compiled code depending on the processor being used. This can mean the difference between 2 and 20 milliseconds for a small number of lines of code to execute before the user receives a response. (<http://benchmarksgame.alioth.debian.org/>, <http://benchmarksgame.alioth.debian.org/u32/benchmark.php?test=all&lang=v8&lang2=gpp&data=u32>)



By now you may be doing some math in your head. Keep in mind, we're still talking best possible scenario here. On top of all this hardware and software latency there's the need to load assets (graphics, sound, video) in and out of memory. How memory management is handled can also add a lot of latency to an experience, more so for apps that download its content at runtime from the web as opposed to apps that bundle all of its content within the app locally. This is often where the difference between an experienced developer and an inexperienced developer pays off. Creating lean yet appealing art, animation, and audio is an art form, one that often adds to the benefit of "perceived" performance, and ultimately the end user's experience. A talented developer also will know how to "mask" some of this latency, in a way that makes both the tablet's processor, and the end user, very happy from a performance perspective.

So, do slow performing apps make kids sick? Maybe not literally like the virtual reality example cited earlier, but, many theorise that it can influence how engaged a child is in the experience. An app that is responsive can mean the difference between successfully engaging a child or making them not want to interact with an app at all. It can also influence your rating in CTR, which measures responsivity of every activity.

If you design products for children immediacy is vital. Slugginess can make you feel sick, and contribute to the death of an app.

*Scott Traylor is a former computer science teacher, founder of 360KID, and advisor to a number of children's interactive businesses (non of which are referenced in this article). He currently lives in Silicon Valley and can be reached at Scott@360KID.com.*



# Children's TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

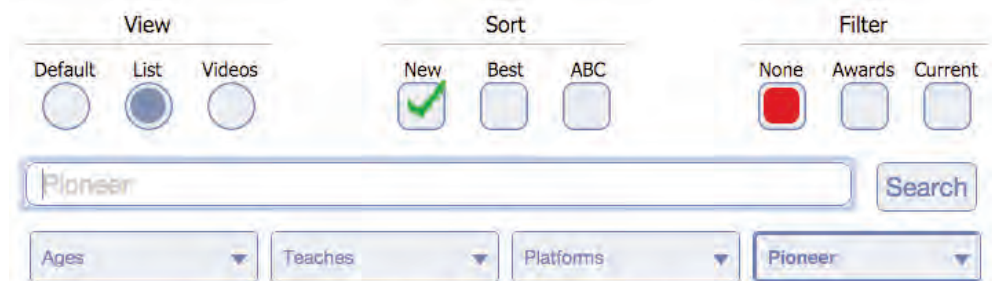
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FLEMINGTON, NJ (11/12/14) -- *Children's Technology Review*, the premier source of unbiased reviews of learning-focused hardware and software since 1993, has introduced the Children's Technology Review Exchange (CTREX) the world's most comprehensive subscriber-accessible database of reviews. CTREX makes it easier for teachers and parents who subscribe to *Children's Technology Review* to find, evaluate, and comment on educational software and hardware for children from pre-K through high school.



151 results found in 0.53 seconds

Rather than wading through page after page of web-searches and anonymous on-line reviews of unknown credibility, CTREX allows educators and parents to quickly zero in on just the right products and to easily compare and evaluate their suitability. Similar products are compared using the same criteria by qualified raters, using the same instrument. In addition, publishers and other subscribers now have the ability to respond to a review.

"We understand that there is no perfect rating system," said Warren Buckleitner, Ph.D., the Founder and Editor of *Children's Technology Review*. "However, we can come as close as possible, and then give our readers the tools they need to fill in the blanks, search, compare and comment."

The CTREX database is designed to be searched by age, curriculum, and technology platform, with additional custom parameters. The service is 100% subscriber funded, so there are none of the conflicts of interest typical of advertising-based sites.

"CTREX is the alternative for people who have grown tired of gimmicky review sites with outdated information, suspicious ratings, affiliate links, or social agendas," said Buckleitner. "We've been rating, testing and revising these reviews for over 20 years; what is new is our means of distribution. For the first time, our paid subscribers can see a review of a new piece of software or educational hardware on the day of its release."

All subscribers to *Children's Technology Review* receive a monthly PDF magazine, along with a password to the CTREX database where back issues are stored. Every Wednesday they receive an issue of CTR Weekly, with three noteworthy reviews.

Subscription rates are \$8/month (4 weeklies plus one issue); \$39/6 months (24 weeklies plus six issues); \$59/year (52 weeklies plus 12 issues) and \$99/2 years (104 weeklies plus 24 issues).

For more information about Children's Technology Review, visit <http://www.childrenstech.com> or call 908-284-9494.



# Feature Reviews and New Releases

NOVEMBER 2014

Here's an alphabetical listing of both the feature reviews (with ratings) and the new and future releases. "Entry Date" refers to the date we first learned of the product.

## Adventure Playground

Six solid matching and sorting activities are set in a playful medieval setting, featuring period music and knights, dragons, royal crowns, a princess, and unicorns.

Games include: Shapes Box - drag and drop tiles onto the correct spot in the box; Suspension Bridge - tilt the iPad or use your finger (your choice) to help a character cross the wooden bridge for a prize; Mayan Temple - rotate the stone disc to crack the code; Wanted - find the character that matches the one shown; Trumps Cave - copy the order in which dragons pass gas or spout fire (you can toggle on/off the farts); and Gemstones - help the dwarves sort the precious gems they have mined.

Need to know: We liked how children are given easy access to a control panel within the activity, so they can manage the background sounds and challenge level. The format feels dry after a few minutes and the way the menu is designed you can miss three of the games (you have to scroll to the side to see them). Some games can become rather challenging but the format gets dry by the time you get to the challenge. Fortunately it is possible to escape to get to something else. The content is well leveled for an older preschooler or Kindergarten-age child.

Details: Spielplatz, [www.janessig.com](http://www.janessig.com). Price: \$3.99. Ages: 4-7. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: classification, sorting, gross motor (balance), patterns, logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 9/17/2014. [WB]



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

90%

## Air Hogs RollerCopter

Designed for indoor use, RollerCopter is a flying RC helicopter that you can also roll along the ground, up walls, and even along the ceiling. The protective cage allows the helicopter to take bumps and keep on moving. Features include: proportional throttle, durable plastic body, and counter rotating blades. Requires 6 AA batteries (not included).

Details: Spin Master Inc., [www.spinmaster.com](http://www.spinmaster.com). Price: \$45. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: An RC helicopter. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 10/7/2014. [WB]



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

78%



## Anki DRIVE

Anki DRIVE is an expensive racing game centered around solid, well crafted race cars that attempt to combine two worlds: digital and physical.

The \$150 kit includes a large, thick vinyl track that you can roll out on the floor. The entire kit can be stored inside a thick cardboard tube. The track has no physical boundaries... the cars stay on the road using an innovative optical sensor.

After you roll out your track and charge your cars, you must download the free app on an iOS device. The cars must then be synced to your iOS device. You must have one device per car; and up to four total cars can be supported. If no other players are around, the other cars drive themselves.

The Starter Kit includes two Anki cars (Boson and Kourai), two charging cases plus a power cord, a 3.5' x 8.5' Starter Track and a tire cleaner. Additional cars cost \$70 each, and expansion tracks are \$100 each. The more you race, the more money you win which you can use to customize your cars. For example, if you choose a speed boost, your car will drive faster.

Our testers found the cars fun at first, but the novelty wore off after a few days and the extra steps involved with downloading the app, charging and syncing the cars eliminated spontaneous play.

Details: Anki, [www.anki.com](http://www.anki.com). Price: \$150. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPod 5, iPad 3 or newer, iPad Mini, iPhone 4S or newer. Teaches/Purpose: driving, fine motor development, collaborative play. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.6 stars. Entry date: 9/5/2014. [WB]



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

## Anti-Coloring Book, The

A nice set of starter ideas for drawing meets a laggy drawing, in this app that has been created around the anti-coloring book curriculum, by an app based on a series of books by art teacher Susan Striker.

Designed for the iPad, the app is designed to give children a set of story starters and art tools, pose a question, and let them express themselves. While the starter questions are useful, the drawing tools are clunky, and your links lag behind your finger. Content includes 40 activities can also be used as a writing prompt. Every activity in the app has a link and recommends a real storybook to read about the subject of the activity.

Details: Young at Art, [www.susanstriker.com](http://www.susanstriker.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-12. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: art, writing, creativity. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.6 stars. Entry date: 10/26/2014. [WB]



Ease of Use	7	73%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	7	

## Baby Zero

Designed to "teach children how to correctly write numerals" and "eliminate numeral reversals in preschool, kindergarten and first grade", this app book consists of ten narrated pages, each with a large numeral, that is slowly illustrated, as the page is narrated. There is no interaction, other than turning on/off the narrator or flipping the pages.

We're not sure about this one. It raises the question - is it developmentally appropriate to introduce a baby or toddler to letter formation? Some, including the Picky Teacher, would ask "why not just wait until a child is older, when they have fine motor skills and when reversal issues naturally work themselves out."

Details: MPzero Studios, [www.mp0studios.com](http://www.mp0studios.com). Price: \$5.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: letter formation, handwriting. Entry date: 10/28/2014.





## DigiBirds

Your cat will love DigiBirds -- palm-sized interactive birds available in a variety of designs. They tweet, sing and move, and they can respond and sing with each other using the same sonic chirp technology used by the Furby toys. DigiBirds come with a whistle ring and are sold individually for \$9.99, with a birdcage for \$14.99, with a birdhouse for \$19.99, or in sets of three with three whistle rings for \$29.99. They are powered by button cell batteries.

Details: Spin Master Inc., [www.spinmaster.com](http://www.spinmaster.com). Price: \$30. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: artificial life. This is a "watch me" toy.. Entry date: 10/7/2014.



## Disaster Hero

This is a free, browser-based online game created for the American College of Emergency Physicians and FEMA by Legacy Games.

The objective is to help children and families think about how to prepare for natural disasters. The game is free to play but requires registration. Visit [www.disasterhero.com](http://www.disasterhero.com).

Details: Legacy Games, . Price: \$free. Ages: 6-13. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: how to prepare for disasters. Entry date: 10/18/2012.







## Fantasia: Music Evolved

Harmonix, the creators of Rock Band, Dance Central and Guitar Hero, have done it again -- this time with a collaboration with Walt Disney.

First a bit of history. The music rhythm game genre initially gained credibility with Dance Dance Revolution (2001). You may recall taking off your shoes to step on those vinyl dance pads.

Then Nintendo's motion sensing Wii Remotes (2006) made it possible to interact on-screen dancers with body movements, and this, in turn paved the way for a new generation of motion based rhythm games — no pad or accessories needed. In 2010, Microsoft's Kinect shook the genre, with the first camera-based system. Now your body was the controller. But the Kinect interface was finicky. Today (2014) both the Sony PS4 and the Xbox One systems come with much more powerful camera based motion detection, creating a new opportunity for smart designers. Fantasia: Music Evolved is one result.

This is the first game we've seen that can detect close/far movements -- difference between a punch forward and back, and wave or swipe from side to side. The experience is best described as letting you become a DJ with your body movements, and it's surprisingly accurate.

In the story, you enter an interactive fantasy-land inspired from Walt Disney's Fantasia (1940). You are selected by sorcerer Yen Sid to learn special movements, by way of carefully designed tutorials. We liked how the tutorials feel supportive -- there are no boos or negative messages.


The music is mixed up and generally wonderful, with 25 selections that include Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor (played by the London Symphony Orchestra), selections by Bruno Mars and Queen.

The mix of quality music and accurate body tracking make this title noteworthy for raising the bar in rhythm games. You won't be disappointed.

The game is rated E10+ (suggestive lyrics) and costs \$60 for Xbox One, \$50 for Kinect for Xbox 360. See the preview from E3 2013 at <http://youtu.be/UX2NG2lyuT0>.

Details: Harmonix Music Systems, Inc., . Price: \$60. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Xbox One, Xbox 360. Teaches/Purpose: music, rhythm, gross motor development. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 10/30/2014. [WB]



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

## Fantasy Life


Animal Crossing meets Dragon Quest, in this well designed but complex role-playing game (RPG) that lets you become one of the central characters in a fictional town. You can become a cook, tailor, carpenter, blacksmith or wizard for example; each has different abilities, games, and related tools.

You learn that you can make items for your house -- when you're a tailor, you can make a carpet, for example.

It is possible to customize your character, decorate your home, and take care of pets. There are some multi-player features, but just three game save slots, so this game is not good for library circulation. This is not a casual game -- plan on putting in a full day of play before you start understanding the full potential of this experience. Our testers, who spent 30 hours with the game, didn't like all the tutorials and extra steps required to get started. But they said "the more you play, the more this game grows on you."

Details: Nintendo of America, Inc., [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com). Price: \$40. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic, trading, spatial relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 10/26/2014. [WB]



Ease of Use	7	88%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	9	



## Feed Maxi!

This is a sluggish multiple-choice speech and language drill that deals specifically with food-related vocabulary. It includes record keeping, the ability to pre-select food categories, and five individual student profiles. Content covers 80 food items. Features include the ability to toggle on/off text, sound effects & statistics and the ability to select specific food items.

Here's how it works. Children "feed" Maxi, a hungry monkey who has the ability to sign using American Sign Language (ASL). At the "hard" setting (three food items), children see three food items and one target item. They hear the phrase "give me pear" and see the request signed in ASL.

Responses are rewarded with a silly routine that can't be interrupted, and that has no relation to the meaning of the word. In addition, you can't repeat the request. And finally, this is the kind of technology experience that makes you wonder why any child's education should be relegated to this type of activity. Perhaps as an assessment, but it seems as if you'd probably know a child well enough to know if they have this level of vocabulary. We'll leave these questions to the philosophers.

Details: Speak Eazy Apps LLC, [www.speakeazyapps.com](http://www.speakeazyapps.com). Price: \$2.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: language, reading, sign language (ASL), food vocabulary, testing. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.4 stars. Entry date: 10/23/2014. [WB]



Ease of Use	7	68%
Educational	7	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	6	
Good Value	7	

## GoldieBlox Zipline Action Figure

This kit includes a Goldie action figure doll with articulated shoulders, hips, knees and joints and specially designed feet that fit on axles and hands that grip. Besides the doll, the kit contains a 13' zipline, one action figure tool belt, wrench, and the snap-together parts needed to make a zipline riding device (e.g., wheel ends, T joints and mini axles). BTW, the GoldieBlox blog contains some excellent craft ideas that use free and found materials, at <http://blog.goldieblox.com/>

Details: GoldieBlox, [www.goldieblox.com](http://www.goldieblox.com). Price: \$25. Ages: 8-13. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: science, creativity, physical science. Entry date: 10/2/2014.



## Haunted House Heroes

Featuring a funny intro, good characters and clunky navigation, this is an explore and find game, featuring Curly Cat. The setting is a mansion and surrounding woods, and the mission is to rescue pets.

There is no help or hints, and a wrong move can trap you into watching the introduction again, which can't be skipped. Sadly the only thing scary about this app is the UI (user interface).

Details: 360 Design Studios, [www.360designstudios.com](http://www.360designstudios.com). Price: \$.99. Ages: 6-12. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: Halloween. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 1.8 stars. Entry date: 10/28/2014. [WB]



Ease of Use	3	35%
Educational	N	
Entertaining	4	
Design Features	3	
Good Value	4	



## iPad Air 2 and iPad Mini 3

Once again delivering on the promise "thinnest, most powerful iPad ever", the differences between the annual Apple iPad releases are also getting thinner. The 2014 iPad details are important to know, because the iPad remains the leading children's app delivery device. In addition, Apple has lowered the price of the older iPad Mini to \$250; which is just \$100 more than the Amazon Fire HD Kids. Folks, we have a horse race.

So what's new? Key features include fingerprint reading, and support for Apple Pay within apps. This means your child can spend money faster and easier, in theory, providing you've given them one of your ten fingerprint recognition slots. The screen has improved, with an anti-glare surface, and the front camera has been improved. Apple says current iPads can now run 675,000 apps; of which we estimate 20% are related to children.

Inside: a "second generation 64-bit A8X chip, new cameras, faster Wi-Fi and LTE wireless, and a Touch ID fingerprint identity sensor." The A8X chip "delivers 2.5 times the graphics performance of iPad Air, and still delivers the up to 10-hour battery life."

An M8 motion coprocessor gathers motion data from the accelerometer, gyroscope, compass and a new barometer senses air pressure, so it can tell you your relative elevation.

Camera improvements include an 8MP sensor for time-lapse video, slo-mo and 1080p HD video. The front (facetime) camera "captures over 80 percent more light" than iPad Air's camera, and now features burst mode as well as HDR stills and video.

Wi-Fi improvements include "2.8 times the Wi-Fi performance of iPad Air, at data rates up to 866 Mbps" and better cellular performance.

The iPad mini line has been updated. The new iPad Mini 3 also has Touch ID and costs \$300. Both iPads feature a stunning Retina display, amazing A7 chip, 5MP iSight camera, FaceTime HD camera and ultrafast wireless. The iPad Mini 2 now costs \$250.

iPad Air 2 with Wi-Fi models will cost \$499 (US) for the 16GB model, \$599 (US) for the 64GB model and \$699 (US) for the 128GB model.

iPad mini 3 with Wi-Fi models will be available for a suggested retail price of \$399 (US) for the 16GB model, \$499 (US) for the 64GB model and \$599 (US) for the 128GB model.

iPad Air, iPad mini 2 and iPad mini, available in silver or gray, are offered at now more affordable prices. iPad Air starts at \$399 (US) for the 16GB with Wi-Fi model, iPad mini 2 starts at \$299 (US) for the 16GB with Wi-Fi model, and iPad mini starts at \$249 (US) for the 16GB with Wi-Fi model.

iPad Air 2 and iPad mini 3 come in gold, silver and gray and ship next week in US, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China (Wi-Fi models only), Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Macau (Wi-Fi models only), Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. Availability in Croatia, Greece, Puerto Rico, Russia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and elsewhere around the world will continue through the end of October, with additional global availability in the coming months.

Details: Apple, [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com). Price: \$500. Ages: 0-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: a multi-touch tablet. Entry date: 10/16/2014.





## Jelly Jumble

Everyone loves a fast, responsive matching game like Bejeweled or Candy Crush. Wouldn't it be sweet to find a version for children, without the gimmicks?

Jelly Jumble is a "gem matching" game for children that is like Candy Crush, but you pay for up front, so you don't get the ads or in-app purchases. It rides a powerful, fast-paced play pattern that is thick with positive reinforcement that creates an opportunity for rich, fun, spatial problem solving.

The games are embedded into a story illustrated by Evgenia Golubeva, narrated by Myles McLeod (The Octonauts, Tilly and Friends). The 14 chapters are arranged in a board-game style menu, so you can see how you have to go to get to the end. In the story, young Oliver is sent to spend the summer with his grumpy aunt. But when a basket of rainbow berries mysteriously disappears, it leads Oliver to a big, blue, friendly monster who lives in the forest and makes magical jams. The story of Oliver and Soren (the monster) explores classic themes of friendship.

Need to know -- this game can be addicting. When you mute the background music you also mute all the sounds (too bad there aren't two sound settings). Also note that this game is hard, and children may need help. Finally, there's an obvious candy, sweet theme, which makes it harder to brainwash a child into eating veggies. Progress is automatically bookmarked so they can start over on another day. The app was created by Stark Studios. Available in English, French, Spanish and German.

Details: StoryToys, [www.storytoys.com](http://www.storytoys.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 4-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: logic, matching, strategy, memory. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 9/29/2014. [WB]



<b>Ease of Use</b>	7
<b>Educational</b>	8
<b>Entertaining</b>	9
<b>Design Features</b>	10
<b>Good Value</b>	9

86%



## Kurio Phone

This is an unlocked Android phone with parental controls, with Google Play access. Children can call and text message friends, take photos, watch and record videos, listen to music, go online and download apps through Google Play.

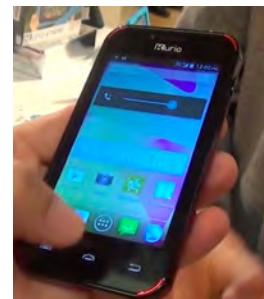
This Android phone features parental controls created for KD Kids by ichaper Technology ([www.ichaper.com](http://www.ichaper.com)). The Internet filter is called the "Kurio Genius" and it covers "more than 500 million websites in 170 languages."

You can choose an age appropriate filter level, allow or block specific websites, and view your child's browsing history.

You can also choose which applications are allowed and which are blocked or restricted; newly downloaded applications are blocked by default. Parents can manage children's contacts, allowing or blocking specific phone numbers. The contacts your child adds himself must be added to a safe list first by you. Other features include: create up to five primary contacts who are not subject to any restrictions and can also receive alerts from the child; set daily, weekly or monthly call-time limits and limit number of text messages; set restricted times by day of the week during which calls, SMS messages and restricted applications are blocked; use Kurio Phone's GPS to monitor your child's position every 15, 30 or 60 minutes, including his/her current position and last known locations; Geofencing which lets you preset secure and danger zones on a map and if your child leaves a secure zone or enters a danger zone, and alert is triggered; and I.C.E. - store child's information including date of birth, allergies, doctor's name, etc. If the phone is lost or stolen, you can remotely trigger an alarm and lock the phone so that it cannot be used, take a picture at phone start up, erase phone data, or track the device's current location.

Features: Android 4.2 (jellybean) operating system; 4" capacitive touch screen; Dual Core processor; Wi-Fi built in/3G mobile data; bluetooth; and 4GB internal memory. Phone comes with earbuds, a wall charger and USB cable. Different colored phone cases are sold separately.

Details: Techno Source, [www.technosourceusa.com](http://www.technosourceusa.com). Price: \$160. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Android. Teaches/Purpose: a phone with parental control utilities. Entry date: 10/5/2014.





## Kurio Xtreme

This is the 2014 edition of the 7 inch Kurio Tablet, called Kurio Xtreme. Headlines include a faster Intel Atom processor (Android 4.4), Google certification, and a set of ten motion recognition games, called Body Motion Gaming, that incorporate your body movements into the game. You can enter a swimming race by air swimming, for example.

Past versions of the Kurio have scored well considering parental controls and preloaded app selection. The Google Play certification means a lot, because parents will have the ability to update this device with many mainstream apps.

The browser offers the "Kurio Genius Filtering System" and the parental controls let you set a timer, allow or block apps and so on. Kurio promises pre-loaded versions of Fruit Ninja, Jetpack Joyride, Subway Surfer and Cut the Rope 2; playing up the potential of this device for gaming. Other features include front and rear facing cameras, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, dual speakers and an integrated Mic. Kurio has curiously also announced a partnership with Common Sense Media offering two pre-loaded Common Sense apps (Digital Passport and an app selector). So now we have to wonder how Common Sense Media will rate Kurio Xtreme.

Details: Techno Source, [www.technosourceusa.com](http://www.technosourceusa.com). Price: \$130. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Android. Teaches/Purpose: An Android tablet for kids. Entry date: 10/5/2014.

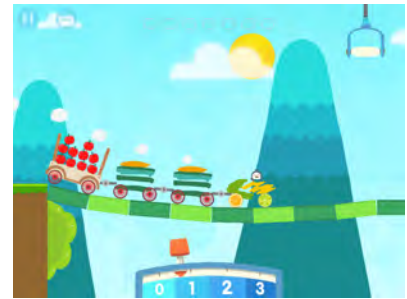


## Labo Train

Can you get your train to the end of the track without spilling your load of apples? That's the challenge with this well designed app that combines creativity, bridge building, physics, shape matching and timing all in one app. While there are a few design quirks, the overall idea of letting children decorate a train, and then allowing them to drive it over a road with bridges that requires repair without spilling a load of apples is solid, and it succeeds in giving them an authentic challenge.

The more courses you unlock, the more stickers and designs you unlock. Progress is saved automatically. This is an ideal app for a slightly older child (late four or five) that is ready for a challenge. There's plenty of content, including 14 colors, 46 train templates, 15 types of tires, 20 stickers, four scenes (daytime, night, rain, snow) and 24 levels with over 40 broken roads to fix. Features include the ability to toggle the background music on/off. The best part? The creative train wrecks. There is no language required to use the app. Available in English, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese.

Details: Labo Lado Inc., [www.labolado.com](http://www.labolado.com). Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, coloring, trains, shapes, number.. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 10/6/2014. [WB]



<b>Ease of Use</b>	8	92%	
<b>Educational</b>	10		
<b>Entertaining</b>	10		
<b>Design Features</b>	9		
<b>Good Value</b>	9		



## LEGO Fusion

This is a \$35 box of 200 LEGO bricks with a special building platform (see LEGO Life of George for a similar idea). Creations can be photographed with Apple or Android phones or tablets and imported into the free app.

The idea is to blend physical and digital play using cameras. There will be four apps in the series: Town Master, Battle Towers, Create & Race and Resort Designer; and each has a custom set of bricks that you will need to buy in order to use the corresponding free app.

An essential element is the "FUSION capture plate," with a printed design that enables a smart phone or tablet's camera to identify the size and colors of the LEGO bricks built onto it. In response to game prompts, children build vertically in 2-D on the FUSION capture plate, enabling the app to see, import and transform the creation into 3-D in the digital world.

In Town Master, you create and rule your own LEGO town, first by building it with LEGO bricks, and then capturing it and importing it into the game. You build the houses, pizzeria, fire station and bike shop while completing errands and missions like catching robbers, fighting fires and skateboarding. To keep the mini-figure citizens happy, you must solve problems through physical building and earn points to gain access to more structures, and even run additional towns.

In Battle Towers, you build a tower with real pieces, and defend it against attack choosing tower defenders like wizards and archers and battle against evil warriors, skeleton armies, and more. If a tower is damaged in battle, you can repair the damage with a timed build with the game's real LEGO bricks.

In Create & Race, you drive the cars you snap together, with modifications for racing, demolition or stunts. You find out that the brick's shape and color matters for performance. Three themed courses offer a variety of challenges, with items to unlock.

In Resort Designer, you design new vacation houses, shops and activities for Ambersands Beach.

Developed by TT Games, makers of the best-selling LEGO video game franchise. Battle Towers, Create & Race, and Resort Designer app games are free for download from the Apple, Google or Samsung App Store for Apple iOS and Android. LEGO Fusion's senior design manager is Ditte Bruun Pedersen.

Details: LEGO Americas, [www.lego.com](http://www.lego.com). Price: \$35. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android, Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: fine motor skills, logic, timing, fine motor development, building. Entry date: 6/19/2014.



## LEGO Minecraft

Coming this fall -- a new set of Minecraft-inspired LEGO kits titled "The First Night", "The Mine", "Workbench", "Dragon Edge", "The Cave" and "The End." The sets will mimic the blocky aesthetic of the original game with people, creepers, mooshrooms, skeletons, zombies, and pigs, as well as over 500 pieces. Minecraft was launched in 2009 by Mojang and was recently bought by Microsoft for \$2.5 billion.

Details: LEGO Americas, [www.lego.com](http://www.lego.com). Price: \$35. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: creativity. Entry date: 10/15/2014.





## Little Critter Shapes

This interactive board book is designed to teach young children shapes using colorful images such as a shooting star, an oval train track, and a crescent moon. Children can explore the pictures and learn new vocabulary, and the story can be personalized with your own narration. Other features include: highlighted narration; tappable words and pictures; select a scene; and parental controls.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, [www.oceanhousemedia.com](http://www.oceanhousemedia.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-5. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 6.1 or later). Teaches/Purpose: shapes. Entry date: 6/12/2014.



## MaKey MaKey Invention Kit

This \$50 switching kit lets you control events on your computer screen by touching items like clay, bananas or plants. At the heart of the kit is a small Arduino-like circuit board (about the size of a playing card). After you plug the device into your PC or windows laptop using the included USB cable, you can control events on your screen by touching arrows, the spacebar or click controls on the board. There are instructions for about 12 different projects; although it is possible to come up with many possibilities. We found the board to be well designed, and things worked the first time without any glitches.


For example, you can make a game controller by first finding a game online, then making some buttons out of clay and sticking them on a table. You then have to ground yourself by touching an alligator clip that is correctly connected to the board. Rearrange the wires, and these same clay clumps can become a keyboard.

In the box: one MaKey MaKey circuit board; one USB Cable; 7 Alligator Clips; 6 Connector Wires; Instructions and Visual Project Start Guide and 20 Color Stickers. Not in the box -- your fingers, any bananas or a computer. We tested the kit using a MacBook Air and it worked just fine. This project is based on Research at MIT Media Lab's Lifelong Kindergarten but the kit is sold by a private, for-profit company. Note that MaKey MaKey runs on top of Arduino, and you can start using your MaKey MaKey board in "Arduino mode" at any time. This would allow you to spin motors, turn on LEDs, or anything else that an Arduino can do. There's no need to understand Arduino in order to use MaKey MaKey.

Details: MaKey MaKey, <http://makeymakey.com>. Price: \$50. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Mac OSX, Windows, Linux. Teaches/Purpose: electronics, circuits, technology, electricity. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 10/18/2012. [WB]



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





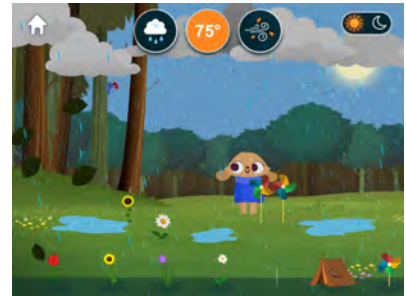
## MarcoPolo Weather

Part two of the MarcoPolo Discovery series, this app turns your iPad into a playful, fictionalized weather machine, by offering an open-ended sandbox experience along with controls for night/day, temperature, wind and weather.

You start with a sunny, summer forest scene, and three silly animal characters, plus different outfits and food items that you can drag and drop into the scene. There's a wide range in the temperature (from from -4 to 104 F) and you can toggle between units of Fahrenheit and Celsius. If you enter your birth date, you unlock more extreme (and more fun) weather conditions for \$1.99, but we found plenty to do in the free app.

There are some clever menu items that appear only if the conditions are right. A kite appears when it gets windy, and you can a flashlight at night to spot the owl. You learn that flowers won't bloom in the cold, and you can only throw snowballs when the temperature setting is below zero. While some of this content seems accurate, other content is not very realistic -- you can't feed a bird an apple and the skunk has a gas problem. There is no scary content and just about everything on the screen responds to your touch.

Details: MarcoPolo Learning, [www.gomarcopolo.com](http://www.gomarcopolo.com). Price: \$free, \$1.99. Ages: 3-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 5.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: science, weather. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 10/2/2014. [WB]



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

## Mini-U: The Kitchen

Sort and classify hundreds of mouth-watering hand drawn illustrations, all related to food and food preparation, in this set of six games.

Games include Morning Tunes - create morning melodies by using kitchen items; Product Sorter - pick out edible and inedible stuff; Breakfast Composer - find hidden breakfast items; Italian Chef - pick the correct macaroni and drag it to its shadow; Cocktail Maker - mix different fruits to create a cocktail of a certain color; and Fridge Operator - fill the fridge with items matching the shadows shown. You'll need sharp eyes, and some of the games are harder to play than others, so make sure you show children how the escape menu works. The art style is similar to other PopApp titles we've reviewed. See also Mini-U: The Bathroom.

Details: PopApp Factory, [www.popappfactory.com](http://www.popappfactory.com). Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: color, shape recognition. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 4/8/2014. [WB]



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



## Monster High Monster Maker

This is a specialized printer that uses consumable materials.

The starter kit includes a printer, doll body parts, 9 colored markers, 3 blank fashions and shoes, 1 rooted wig, 2 molded wigs, 3 "blank" bodies, 3 doll stands, 1 tool stand and 1 eraser sponge.

You download the app, free. To change colors, you have to follow your app's instructions, open the door, and put in a new color.

Details: Mattel, Inc., [www.mattel.com](http://www.mattel.com). Price: \$130. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android, Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, printing. Entry date: 10/3/2014.







## My First 10monkeys Math App

Seven solid math games meet a hard-to-understand interface.

Created in Finland, the app is the second in a series. Ten monkeys have boarded a space vessel. You help them get home by playing the games. If you have the abilities to use the menus, you won't need the app. Once in the games, however, you can find some fast-paced math practice.

Details: 10monkeys, [www.10monkeys.com](http://www.10monkeys.com). Price: \$2.99. Ages: 4-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math, counting, more/less, addition. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 2.8 stars. Entry date: 10/28/2014. [WB]



Ease of Use	2	56%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	5	
Good Value	5	

## My Very Hungry Caterpillar

Responsive and well designed, this simple virtual life simulation features Eric Carle's The Very Hungry Caterpillar.

You start with an egg on an empty white screen. Tapping on the egg helps your caterpillar hatch. You pick fruit from the trees to feed him, tuck him into his bed stump, and grow food in the garden.

Each time you wake your caterpillar, he (or she) grows just a bit, hungry and bored. You can pick fruit, sail on a pond with rubber ducks and grow flowers and fruit in a 3D garden.

The more you play, the more surprises you'll find, including new activities, new fruit, floating bubbles and a wind-up Ladybug. Soon (about 15 minutes) your caterpillar turns into a butterfly, and a new egg is laid, and the process is repeated, with a butterfly floating in the background. Note that despite the scientifically accurate cycle, there's very little scientific validity to this app.

This app is a case study in how to properly bring a rock star character from a children's book to a multi-touch screen, after several failed attempts (see, for example, Counting with the Very Hungry Caterpillar). It's nice to see that caterpillars, and apps, can evolve.

Details: StoryToys, [www.storytoys.com](http://www.storytoys.com). Price: \$3.99. Ages: 2-7. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: virtual life, simulation, insects, bugs, taking care of things, metamorphosis. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 10/18/2014. [WB]



Ease of Use	10	95%
Educational	N	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	10	

## Nancy Drew: Labyrinth of Lies

The 31st edition of this single player, Mac/PC based mystery series follows Nancy to Greece where she hunts for stolen artifacts.

You can decorate the museum displays, solve puzzles inspired by Greek myths and text message with Frank and Joe Hardy. Features include the ability to erase mistakes, or play at either amateur or "Master Sleuth" level. More game specific info at <http://bit.ly/1lxjc6g>.

Details: Her Interactive, Inc., [www.herinteractive.com](http://www.herinteractive.com). Price: \$20. Ages: 12-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX (disk or digital download). Teaches/Purpose: logic, deductive reasoning, reading, memory. Entry date: 10/14/2014.





## Pac-Man and the Ghostly Adventures 2

Featuring characters from the Pac-Man and the Ghostly Adventures animated series, this video game takes Pac Man, Spiral and Cylindria on an adventure to defend PacWorld from Lord Betrayus.

You can play either as Cylindria or Spiral as you use such things as a hoverboard or a Cherry Copter to travel into outer space or back in time. New characters come from Seasons 1 & 2 of the series. Prices are \$30 for the Nintendo 3DS, and \$40 for the Wii U, Playstation 3, and Xbox 360 versions.

Details: Bandai Namco Games America Inc., [www.bandainamcogames.com](http://www.bandainamcogames.com). Price: \$30. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS, Wii U, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, logic, Halloween. Entry date: 10/23/2014.



## Senda and The Glutton Dragon

Beautiful illustrations and professional narration meet a solid story and plenty of touch points. In the fictional story, a dragon learns that a balanced diet is important. The story has typical "prince saves princess" gender stereotyping -- too bad the child can't have the choice about who saves who.

Content includes 14 screens that pan left and right with a swipe to extend their size, with a nice 3D effect. A touch counter rewards the discovery of the animated objects on each screen with a star.

Text scaffolding is solid, making this a good early language experience. You can toggle on/off the narrator and words are highlighted as read.

Details: Soyo Interactive SL, <http://www.soyointeractive.com/EN/>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 4-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 6.0 or later) (Big App). Teaches/Purpose: reading, language, diet. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 7/25/2014. [WB]



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

## Tamagotchi Friends

About the size of a large goose egg (much larger than any previous version of Tamagotchi) the 2014 edition of Tamagotchi takes the "take care of a virtual pet" theme up a notch, by letting your Tamagotchi socialize with friends. When any two Tamagotchi devices are placed back-to-back, they make friends (if only it were that easy with children).

The pixelated LED creatures can jump from screen to screen, share a birthday party and so on. But here's the catch -- you must own two or more other \$20 Tamagotchi's in order to use these features. This isn't unlike the Furby "buy one, want another" scheme. Runs on 2 AAA batteries.

Details: Bandai Namco Games America Inc., [www.bandainamcogames.com](http://www.bandainamcogames.com). Price: \$20. Ages: 7-14. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: socialization, taking care of a simulated living creature. Entry date: 10/15/2014.





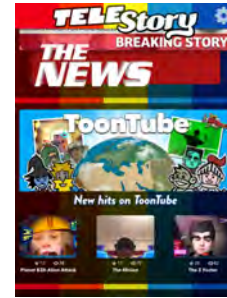
## TeleStory

Turn your iPad into a TV studio, where you're the star. The process is simple, thanks to auto-props that use face recognition to automatically provide props and wardrobe items.


You start by choosing from four themes: the news, a music video, taking a drive as a private eye, and a Star Wars like theme. Next, you can mix and match, from over 30 animated scenes, recording yourself as the central character. Content includes 50 digital costume items, each with face tracking abilities. These include glasses, wigs, hands and so on. We did not see any worrisome content.

Once you've created a project you can easily save your work to your local photo or video library, or you can share it on the ToonTube Global Storytelling Network for Kids, where pre-screened work is shared. The main menu is big and bold, and takes some getting used, but our testers were able to figure it out.

Details: Launchpad Toys, <http://launchpadtoys.com>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 7.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: creativity, using the camera, acting, self esteem. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 10/13/2014. [WB]



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



## Theatrhythm Final Fantasy Curtain Call

If you like the dramatic, swooping symphonic music featured in Final Fantasy games, and rhythm matching game play (and you happen to own a Nintendo 2DS or 3DS), this is the ideal game for you.

A mix of music, story and fine motor skills this sequel to the first Final Fantasy rhythm action game (released in 2012) expands on the original with new game modes, 221 songs and 60 playable characters.

You can tap and swipe along to the beats and harmonies as the stylized characters battle their way through worlds.


Content includes 26 years of Final Fantasy music, plus songs and characters from recent and upcoming releases. You can play in either Versus Mode (head-to-head) or Quest Medley (customize a party of characters to engage in music-based battles against series bosses).

CTR tester Zig says "If you don't currently care for music and rhythm games, you probably won't like this game. However if you are a serious fan of the Final Fantasy series, you'll probably like the music from Final Fantasy editions. In terms of what you do, there's not much that sets this game apart from any other music/rhythm game. You have to hit a button or move the stylus on the screen to get a note to line up with a specific point on the screen."

Details: Square Enix, Inc., [www.square-enix.com/na/](http://www.square-enix.com/na/). Price: \$40. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: music, rhythm, fine motor control. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 8/28/2014. [WB]



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





## Tiggly Add Venture

Beautifully illustrated and based on strong math pedagogy, but over-scripted at times and limited in things to do, this app is part of a series that has been specially designed around a custom set of five rubbery unit blocks that can be detected by the iPad's capacitive screen. One block set sells for \$30, at [www.tiggly.com](http://www.tiggly.com). Currently there are six Tiggly apps, and all but one is free. In addition, the apps can be used without the blocks in finger mode. In order to use the blocks, the blocks mode must be unlocked, by asking you to touch certain blocks to the screen in order.

Next, you choose from two simple side-scrolling counting challenges, where you build number line bridges by touching the correct quantity of rubbery blocks to the screen.

It would be nice to have a sandbox mode in each app, so you can freely build with the apps. Weaknesses include looping music and revolving-door style prompts that give the interaction style a pushy feel. The blocks are pricey, but they add a fun and unique tangible element. This is one of a series of apps that support the blocks.

From a pedagogical point of view the apps follow the same logic as Cuisenaire rods. They make it easy for a young child to associate length and quantity. To help some more, the blocks are color coded and magnetic, so they can stick together. They make a lot of sense for any iPad equipped math area, which is becoming more common in more preschool and kindergarten classrooms.

See also Tiggly Cardtoons, Tiggly Safari, Tiggly Draw, Tiggly Stamp, Tiggly Chef and Tiggly Christmas.

Details: Tiggly, <http://tiggly.com/>. Price: \$free, \$30. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math, counting, units, number lines, counting from 1-10. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 10/28/2014. [WB]



Ease of Use	7	84%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	



## Toca Boo

Help a ghost named Bonnie playfully scare six family members in the six darkened rooms of her house. You discover that it is easy to move Bonnie around to freely explore (she follows your finger) and that you can turn the lights on or off, hide under the bed, or play with some of the items in the rooms. There are no wrong answers; only silly gags, including the ability to hide inside a toilet, and the ability to scare people with burps or farts depending on the food item you feed Bonnie. You quickly learn that it is possible to get caught if you don't hide which adds a fun game element.

It's worth noting that there are no specific Halloween-related content (e.g., no Jack-O-Lanterns, witches or skeletons) and no worrisome content as long as you don't mind the digestive noises. Also worth noting -- the illustration style leans toward the abstract scale of the art spectrum. The dog doesn't appear to have a head, for example, and a man has extremely exaggerated stilt legs. We loved the depiction of the video game playing boy, who uses the light of the screen to spot the ghost. Some will like this art style more or less than others.

Testers found the app to be fun and playful, but limited. One didn't like how the ghost could make a little boy cry -- the scaring seems mean-spirited because it is possible to chase the boy to continue the scaring. It would be more fun if the boy went to hide and scared you back. Another wanted a haunted version of Toca Town instead, where you could do more. There are no specific language issues in this app... Like the sims, the characters makes vocal sounds, but don't use words.

Details: Toca Boca, <http://tocaboca.com/>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: Halloween, causality, problem solving, spatial relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 10/20/2014. [WB]



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



## WePublish

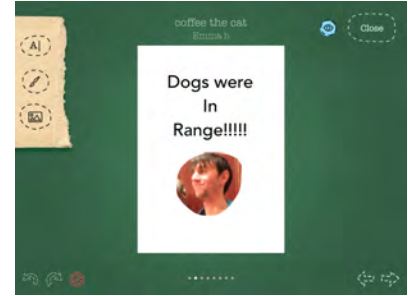
This is an iPad-based book designer and printing tool. You start by entering a title and your name, and then you move to the design tools. You are limited to eight rather small panels, which are automatically imposed onto a one page layout, making it possible to make a printed book with pages from one sheet of paper that is folded into 1/8 size rectangles.

There is no direct camera access from within the app, however you can import photos from your picture gallery. While the drawing tools are limited (there are no colors, for example) you quickly learn how to use the collage tools to make cut out visual effects. It is easy to edit a page, resizing objects or putting text around the screen.

Work is saved automatically in a library that can be shared by email.

WePublish is an Australia-based non-profit agency dedicated to helping children learn to read and write. The app was developed in cooperation with Daniel Donahoo of [projectsynthesis.com.au](http://projectsynthesis.com.au).

Details: Kids Own Publishing / Project Synthesis, [www.wepublish.net.au](http://www.wepublish.net.au). Price: \$6.49. Ages: 6-8. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, writing, art, language. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 9/29/2014. [WB]



Ease of Use	8	85%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	8	

## Zoomer

Featuring a multi-jointed body, LED eyes, rechargeable lithium ion batteries, and speech and motion recognition, this robotic toy is packed with technology. The result is an impressive artificial life toy that grabs your attention. Note that this is the first of the Zoomer line from Spin Master. See also Zoomer Dino.

The more you play with Zoomer, the more he learns. He can move around the room, sensing when he runs into things, automatically backing up, and moving in a new direction. A rotational core allows him to roll over (e.g. when playing dead) and the LED eyes blink. Sensors in the chest know when you're scratching his belly, and the "trick button" triggers one of his moves. A USB charging cable and an instruction guide is included. Weaknesses include a cryptic switch system that consists of two toggles. It's hard to know if Zoomer is "on" or "off" and if you don't have the instruction book, you don't know how to make him work. A second recessed switch toggles between English, Spanish and French.

Our testers thought Zoomer was "pretty cool" and he was a hit at Mediatech during the week long testing period. See also Zoomer Dino and Zoomer Zuppies.

Details: Spin Master Inc., [www.spinmaster.com](http://www.spinmaster.com). Price: \$100. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: Smart toy, audio tricks, English, Spanish and French. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 9/20/2013. [WB]



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

## Zoomer Dino

If there was such a thing as electronic chicken this just might be it. This two legged dinosaur uses the same gyros found in toy helicopters to stand up. Because the feet are wheels, a wide range of fast movements are possible. We think this dino represents the next evolution of movement based toys that use gyros. Nose sensors in his nose allow him to react to his surroundings. Like Zoomer the dog, you can train him/her to sit, speak, and perform tail whips. The LED eyes change color to indicate the mood (red is mad) and movement is controlled with a remote control, by way of a small joystick.

The toy can run, chomp, do head motions and become angry, on command. The dinosaur is powered by lithium batteries that are charged from a USB cable. The remote requires 3 "AAA" batteries (not included). The toggles on the belly are complex, and require a look at the manual to understand.

Details: Spin Master Inc., [www.spinmaster.com](http://www.spinmaster.com). Price: \$99.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: A dinosaur robot with some AI. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 10/7/2014. [WB]



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



## Zoomer Zuppies

Designed to appeal to girls and parents who can't afford the \$100 Zoomer dog, these little Zoomers are interactive puppies with lights, sounds and sensors. They are designed to match your personality and style. Each of the seven pups has its own name and design, "one to match every outfit". The puppies have LED eyes and five play modes. The pups also have touch sensors, a music player, mini games and poseable legs. Requires 3 AAA batteries (not included).

Details: Spin Master Inc., [www.spinmaster.com](http://www.spinmaster.com). Price: \$40. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: a dog robot. Entry date: 10/7/2014.

