

Top 10 Essential Apps for a Child's First iPad

What if there were a great, wise and all knowing expert who could automatically find the “best 10 apps?”

Of course this is an impossible task. At CTR we should know. It's our most frequently asked question, which is why we've picked this particular headline. In order to actually find the “best” ten apps for your child, we'd have to first ask you a lot of questions.

- ✓ What is your child's age, their interests and their prior experiences?
- ✓ Will the apps be used at home, school or a library?
- ✓ How much money do you want to spend?
- ✓ How much memory does your child's iPad have? Is it an iPad mini, or a hand-me-down iPad 1 without a camera?

So what are the “Top 10 Essential Apps for a child's first iPad?”

We need your help. The CTREX database link (we call it an “expert link”) can steer you in the right direction, with hundreds of options—but it's up to you to do the sorting. We've tried to make it easy, by giving you videos and screen shots, and direct links to the publisher and Apple or Google's store, so you can check ratings.

We also want you to agree or disagree with us, and help others in the search process. In writing this article we've hand picked a safe “top 40” set of titles using the following criteria.

- ✓ 2014 copyright date.
- ✓ A mix of free and paid options.
- ✓ Editor's Choice selections. All have scored a 4.3 or better on CTR's instrument.
- ✓ A balance between fun and educational.

PRESCHOOL (n = 318)

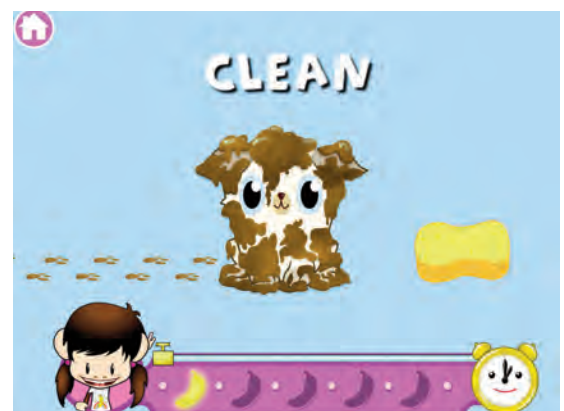
Use the link to search through 318 recent, high rated apps. Or use our recommendation, below.
See the list --> <http://bitly.com/1Aitj3v>

1. Sago Mini Fairy Tales, Sago Sago www.sagosago.com, (\$2.99 on iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sago-mini-fairy-tales/id920007273?mt=8>), for ages 2-5. Why we like it: Simply touch the screen to explore thirty, no-fail animated routines inspired by popular fairy tales. This is the fourth and most recent in a series; all are excellent and work well as a child's first app.

2. Endless Wordplay, Originator www.originatorkids.com, (\$free/\$4.99 on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 5.0 or later) <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/endless-wordplay/id727871636?mt=8>), for ages 3-7. Why we like it: The latest in the “Endless” series of learning apps (all excellent), this app introduces key spelling patterns and phonograms in rhyming words, word puzzles, and animations that reinforce meaning and usage. As with the other apps, the letters come to life.

3. LumiKids Park, Lumosity www.lumikids.com, (\$free on iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/lumikids-park-by-lumosity/id934603970?ls=1&mt=8>), for ages 3-6. Why we like it: Three timed, leveled logic puzzles are easy to play and generally well designed. There is no text or voice-over instructions -- children simply touch a toy to get started. The better they do, the harder it gets.

4. Zuzu's Bananas: A Monkey Preschool Game, Thup Games www.thup.com, (\$2.99 on iPad, iPhone, Android, Kindle <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/keynote/id932142187?mt=8>), for ages 3-6. Why we like it: Fun, fast, and easy to play, this is a collection of 50 timed micro-games, each taking no more than 15 seconds to play. The design resembles Wario Ware or Dumb Ways to Die (adapted for young children) and runs on a tablet.



5. My Very Hungry Caterpillar, StoryToys www.storytoys.com, (\$3.99 on iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/my-very-hungry-caterpillar/id894991908?mt=8>), for ages 2-7. Why we like it: Responsive and well designed, this simple virtual life simulation features Eric Carle's "The Very Hungry Caterpillar."

6. Toca Pet Doctor, Toca Boca <http://tocaboca.com/>, (\$2.99 on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 5.0 or later). <https://itunes.apple.com/app/id808108897>), for ages 2-6. Why we like it: Looking for a perfect "first app" for a child as young as 2? Toca Pet Doctor starts with a waiting room full of 15 critters, each with a problem. The worm is tangled into a knot, the cat has fleas and the frog has swallowed too many flies.

7. Bubl Draw, Bubl www.bublpubl.com, (\$0.99 on iPad (37MB) <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bubl-draw/id719169017?mt=8>), for ages 1-7. Why we like it: Your screen becomes a magical, musical scratch pad, where random taps are instantly rewarded with bursts of colors, music and related sounds. This is another no-fail app that builds a child's feelings of control.

8. Drive About: Number Neighborhood, Artgig Studio, www.artgigapps.com, (\$2.99 on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch) <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/drive-about-number-neighborhood/id864136403?mt=8>), for ages 3-5. Why we like it: Children drive, fly and sail around Number Neighborhood as they discover nine mini-games that effectively reinforce school readiness skills. This is an excellent, no-fail download.

9. Busy Shapes, Seven Academy, (\$2.99 on iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/busy-shapes/id722784048?l=fr&ls=1&mt=8>), for ages 2-5. Why we like it: You can't fit a round peg in a square hole. But you can have a fun time with this smart, responsive, automatically adaptive set of classification puzzles.

10. Elmo Loves You!, StoryToys www.storytoys.com, (\$3.99 on iPhone, iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/app/id895000972?mt=8>), for ages 3-6. Why we like it: Elmo Loves You! is organized around a book metaphor, with 3D pop up pages that unfold with each swipe.

EARLY ELEMENTARY (n=403) See the list --><http://bitly.com/1CTTFeD>

1. Slice Fractions, Ululab Inc. <http://ululab.com>, (\$2.99 on Android, iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 4.3 or later) <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/slice-fractions/id794730213?mt=8>), for ages 6-15. Why we like it: One of our favorite apps is getting better for the same price. Effective August 21 2014, thirty-two additional levels have been added as an update (no extra cost), plus a new underground world with singing mushrooms.

2. Toca Town, Toca Boca <http://tocaboca.com/>, (\$2.99 on iPad, iPod Touch <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/toca-town/id871694174?mt=8>), for ages 3-up. Why we like it: Touch, tap and swipe your way through a small town, with six themed areas; each offering hidden surprises. As with other Toca Boca work, this app is expertly crafted to ensure that children drive the app, and not the other way around.

3. Foos, The: Hour of Code, CodeSpark www.codespark.org, (\$free on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 6.0 or later) <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-foos-code-for-an-hour-free/id923441570?mt=8>), for ages 5-8. Why we like it: Easy to learn and full of playful characters, this early programming experience mixes an Angry Birds type of leveling system with Scratch-style programming icons. In order to move your "Foo" character across the screen to a star, you must drag and drop the correct sequence of commands in the right order.

4. Winky Think Logic Puzzles, Spinlight Studio <http://spinlight.com/>, (\$2.99 on iPad (iOS 8) <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/winky-think-logic-puzzles/id923072172?mt=8>), for ages 5-12. Why we like it: Simplicity meets the perfect type of complexity in this collection of 180 bite sized logic puzzles.

5. World Landmarks Explorer, Peapod Labs www.peapodlabs.com, (\$2.99 on iPad (75 MB) <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/world-landmarks-explorer/id897788782?mt=8>), for ages 4-up. Why we like it: Here's a good way to bring geography to life. Good for all ages - both children and adults, this 23rd title from Chicago-based Peapod Labs contains the same familiar swipe-and-explore navigation you've seen in the ABC Explorer apps. But there's a new twist -- satellite views of 112 world landmarks from 53 countries by way Google Maps.



6. Jack and the Beanstalk by Nosy Crow, Nosy Crow www.nosycrow.com, (\$4.99 on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/jack-beanstalk-by-nosy-crow/id796383629?ls=1&mt=8>), for ages 3-10. Why we like it: It's never been more fun to reach the top of the beanstalk, where nine games offer reading and logical thinking opportunities.

7. Pepi Ride, Pepiplay www.pepiplay.com, (\$2.99 on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/pepi-ride/id935224319?mt=8>), for ages 3-7. Why we like it: Silly, noisy and fun, this app is ideal for the graduates of Sago Road Trip. You pick out a car, decorate it, and then drive it on different tracks. We liked how the jump and speed controls can be controlled by different children, and the way the tracks are leveled to provide a challenge.

8. Pinsaic, Pinsaic www.pinsaic.com, (\$.99 on iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/en/app/pinsaic/id828875981?mt=8>), for ages 4-up. Why we like it: Sometimes a constraint makes you more creative. Pinsaic -- an app that turns your iPad screen into a peg board, lets you create just about anything, as long as it fits on a 22 by 33 dot grid.

9. Toca Nature, Toca Boca, (\$2.99 on iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/toca-nature/id893927401?mt=8>), for ages 5-9. Why we like it: Little kids can play with big ideas, like ecosystems, as they finger paint with trees, lakes and mountains. A grove of oak trees spawns a deer, and a pond creates beavers and fish.

10. Nick Jr. App, Nickelodeon www.nick.com, (\$free on iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nick-jr./id911115712?mt=8>), for ages 3-8. Why we like it: Blurring the definition of "TV" and "Tablet" this app serves up a generous helping of well designed ad-free Nick Jr. TV content, with a dash of interactive content build around show themes or characters. Note that this app promotes passive behavior. Don't miss the closed captioning feature, to increase the early reading value of this experience.



UPPER ELEMENTARY (n = 247) See the list --> <http://bitly.com/1D62XRL>

1. Monument Valley, Usetwo Games www.monumentvalleygame.com, (\$3.99 on iPad (147 MB), iPhone 4 or newer <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/monument-valley/id728293409?mt=8>), for ages 6-up. Why we like it: Addicting, beautiful and leveled perfectly to keep you challenged (and confused), this is a set of ten optical illusion maze puzzles.

2. Curious Words, Curious Hat www.curioushat.com, (\$1.99 on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/curious-words/id942848206?ls=1&mt=8>), for ages 4-up. Why we like it: Easy to use and potentially powerful, this creativity video is like "Vine" for children (young or old).

3. TeleStory, Launchpad Toys <http://launchpadtoys.com>, (\$2.99 on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 7.0 or later) <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/telestory/id915378506?mt=8>), for ages 5-up. Why we like it: Turn your iPad into a TV studio, where you're the star. The process is simple, thanks to auto-prompts that use face recognition to automatically provide props and wardrobe items.

4. Collider, Dan Russell-Pinson <http://dan-russell-pinson.com/>, (\$.99 on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/collider/id376129315?mt=8&uo=4&at=1016aE>), for ages 6-up. Why we like it: This 70 level puzzle game is easy to learn, in part thanks to a good tutorial, and hard to stop playing. Your goal is to cancel out the positive and negative balls, by making them collide. OK, if you want to call them "particles" you can look at this app from an electron/proton point of view. But it's more fun to just call them bouncing balls.

5. Drei HD, Etter Studio Ltd. www.etterstudio.com/en/, (\$3.99 on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 6.0 or later) <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/etter-drei/id708388097?mt=8>), for ages 6-up. Why we like it: This leveled collection of 48 block stacking challenges each starts with a simple looking objective, but involves complex trial and error problem solving with some of the levels requiring collaborative play.



6. Lightbot, Lightbot <http://light-bot.com/>, (\$2.99 on iPad, iPhone, Android <http://light-bot.com/redirect-ios.html>), for ages 9-11. Why we like it: Designed for upper elementary-age children, this "senior" version of Lightbot presents a collection of programming puzzles that use touch-and-drop commands to solve. Like the more rudimentary "Junior" level, there are six sets of puzzles, each with nine challenges. Each starts locked, and must be solved in order, sequentially.

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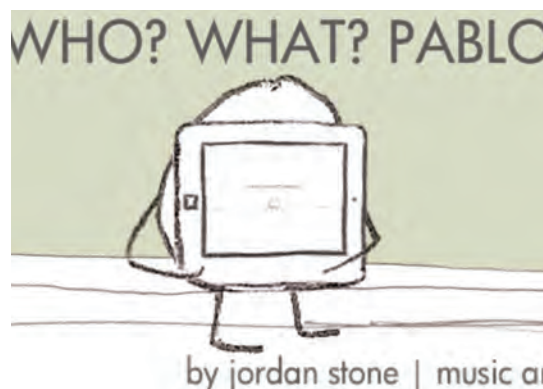
7. Quick Fractions, Shiny Things www.getshinythings.com, (\$1.99 on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 7.0 or later) <https://itunes.apple.com/app/quick-fractions/id859831864?ls=1&mt=8>), for ages 8-12. Why we like it: Turns your iPad's screen into a magic, smart slate where you can draw answers (using MyScript technology, at <http://www.visionobjects.com>) to solve fraction problems, with the tip of your finger. The single app contains multi-levels, a social leader board, and a classroom friendly interface.



8. Paint Double, ambiApps <http://www.ambiapps.com/>, (\$0.99 on iPad, iPhone <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/paint-double/id885863362?mt=8>), for ages 3-up. Why we like it: Incredibly simple, yet rather random, this painting app draws an imaginary line down the center of the screen making it easy to make symmetrical doodles. The color changes with each touch, making it easy to quickly fill the screen with senseless, but pretty doodles. It's just as easy to clear it.

9. Who? What? Pablo!, Sofake.com, (\$2.99 on iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/who-what-pablo!/id906561946?ls=1&mt=8>), for ages 8-up. Why we like it: This 15 screen musical painting has with page elements that unfold into one another, and an innovative parallax scrolling technique that you control with your finger.

10. Oink Oink - My Crazy Farm, Ravensburger Digital GmbH www.ravensburger-games.com/en/, (\$2.99 on iPad, iPhone, Android (124 MB) <https://itunes.apple.com/app/id883139136>), for ages 5-up. Why we like it: Ravensburger, the German company known for quality jigsaw puzzles, has yet to impress us with an app... until now. Here's a fast-paced, addicting logic puzzle that makes a game out of lines, and geometric shapes by turning lines into fences around wandering animals.



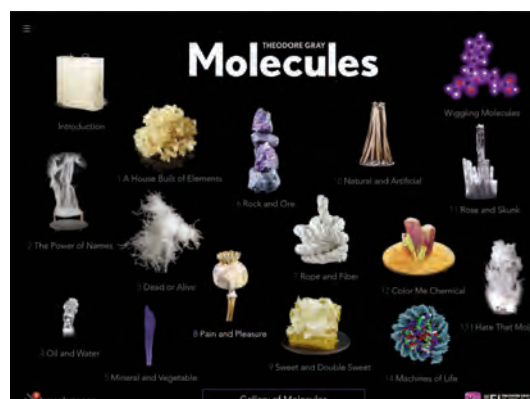
MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL (n = 125) See the list --> <http://bitly.com/1vup11s>

1. Journeys of Invention, (\$9.99 on iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/journeys-of-invention/id685965924?mt=8>), for ages 10-up. Why we like it: Spark a child's interest in science by giving them the chance to explore one of the first Apple 1 computers, the Apollo 10 command module and 78 other rare artifacts of invention.

2. Playmation Spanish, Playmation Studios Inc. <http://playmationstudios.com>, (\$1.99 plus IAP on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 7.1 or later) <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/playmation-spanish/id909491490?mt=8>), for ages 6-up. Why we like it: Want to learn Spanish? Now you can build your own sentences by freely manipulating sentence parts. The visual scaffolds make it all possible.

3. Molecules by Theodore Gray, Touch Press www.touchpress.com, (\$13.99 on iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/app/id923383841?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D8>), for ages 11-up. Why we like it: The hidden magic of matter is revealed in this well illustrated science app that is ideal for prospective scientists. Touch, stretch and twist molecules in this sequel to The Elements and The Elements in Action.

4. Thomas Was Alone, Bossa Nova Studios www.bossastudios.com, (\$5.99 on iPad, Android, iPhone (218 MB) <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/thomas-was-alone/id849095637?mt=8>), for ages 10-up. Why we like it: Here's a game that is proof that interactive design and narrative trumps high budget graphics. Ideal for an older child in need of a challenge, this one player spatial/problem solving game asks you to move a small colored square (named Thomas) through a series of 100 maze-like levels that range from simple to very complex. Progress is saved and it is easy to jump from one level to the next.



5. Off the Rails, Dan Russell-Pinson <http://dan-russell-pinson.com/>, (\$1.99 on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch, Android <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/off-the-rails/id928000230?mt=8&uo=4&at=1016aE>), for ages 8-up. Why we like it: Build roller coasters in real time by tilting your screen. When you are creating your coaster, you see the scene from a first person point of view. We especially liked the facts about roller coaster construction.

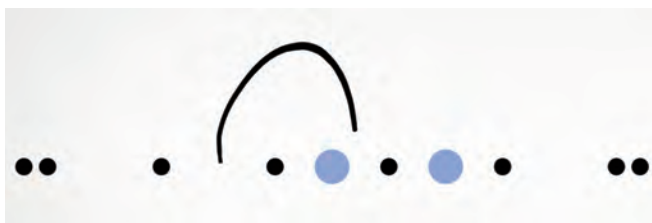
6. iStopMotion 2.3 for iOS, Boinx Software www.boinx.com, (\$9.99 on iPad, iPhone <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/istopmotion-for->

ipad/id484019696?mt=8), for ages 7-up. Why we like it: Every aspiring Walt Disney needs a good animation app, and this one offers the best combination of ease of use and power, with the ability to link to external cameras, control sound and export as an animated GIFs. A free iStopMotion Remote Camera app is also available.

7. Google Earth, Google, Inc. www.google.com, (\$free on Windows, iPad, iPhone, Android, Chrome <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/google-earth/id293622097?mt=8>), for ages 7-up. Why we like it: Available as a free download, Google Earth is a stellar example of how interactive media can make abstract geographical and spatial concepts leap out of a textbook.

8. Blek, Kunabi Brother <http://blekgame.com/>, (\$2.99 on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 6.0 or later) <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/blek/id742625884?mt=8>), for ages 6-up. Why we like it: Fun and rich with spatial and temporal challenges, Blek is a leveled puzzle game that starts with a simple challenge -- to sketch an inch-worm-like line on your touch screen to target dots.

9. Plants vs. Zombies 2: It's About Time, (\$free with InApp



Purchases on iPad, Android <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/plants-vs.-zombies-2/id597986893?mt=8>), for ages 10-up. Why we like it: This classic strategy timing game has been infused with a new set of interactive play opportunities, cheesy zombie puns and in-app purchase options. If you've played the original version, you won't be disappointed with this time-travel theme edition.

10. Tipping Point Adventure Game, (\$1.99 on iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tipping-point-adventure-game/id579849894?mt=8>), for ages 10-up. Why we like it: This is a five chapter science-fiction adventure that starts with a view of a modern-day living room in present time, when you intercept a cryptic message. Features include the ability to save 5 player profiles.





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