



Children's
TECHNOLOGY
REVIEW EXCHANGE

November 2017

**LittleClickers
DIY (p 3)**

**Reviews
Super Mario Odyssey,
Sago Mini Farm, Math Tango
and more ...**

**Discussion
Topics for This Year's Dust or Magic**



On the cover: Super Mario Odyssey -- one of Nintendo's biggest and most important Switch titles.

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** Denotes "Editor's Choice."*

Children's Technology Review
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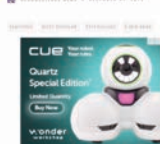
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"Electronic toys that make noises or light up are extremely effective at commanding children's attention by activating their orienting reflex." From "Association of the Type of Toy Used During Play With the Quantity and Quality of Parent-Infant Communication" by Anna V. Sosa, PhD in JAMA Pediatrics at bitly.com/2z2CWYt

The study serves as a timely holiday reminder, that "Traditional toys and book reading can be promoted as language-facilitating activities while play with electronic toys should be discouraged."

Electronic Baby Toys Associated with Decrease in Quality and Quantity of Language in Infants



Electronic toys for infants that produce lights, words and songs were associated with decreased quantity and quality of language compared to playing with books or traditional toys such as a wooden puzzle, a shape sorter and a set of rubber blocks, according to an article published online by JAMA Pediatrics.



Thanks to an algorithm, ads for electronic toys help fund the free access to this article about the harm they can cause.

As the year's end approaches, what are the "hot topics" related to children and technology?

We'll find out this weekend with the annual "trends" panel that starts each Dust or Magic. This year's panel features Robin Raskin as the moderator; with Chris Byrne of TTPM; Raul Gutierrez of Tinybop; Jason Krogh of Sago Mini; Emmet O'Neill of Storytoys; and Mitchel Resnick of MIT's Endless Kindergarten Group. Topics will include:

- "Alexa, tell me a story." What is the "dust" and the "magic" of audio interactive content for voice driven devices?
- ARKit is here. Who's using it to well?
- What's the state of the subscription model?
- iOS 11 and children. What did Apple do right (and wrong)?
- The state of ethics and children's content. Is there a realistic path ahead?
- Last year, Robin Raskin said "Code is the new Mandarin." What's that state of constructivism and technology? Who's doing the best work, that actually supports constructivist ideas?
- More children are using their interactive screens to watch non-interactive content, from YouTube and Netflix. What are the key issues?
- What's hot, and not, with technology used in toys?
- What's new with the 2018 KAPi awards and the BolognaRagazzi Digital Award.

LittleClickers: Sites and Videos for DIY (Do It Yourself)

Making things can be fun and empowering. For this month's LittleClickers column, we found some links and videos that provide kid-friendly ideas. See www.littleclickers.com/diy

Dust or Magic

Save these dates!
www.dustormagic.com

March 23, 2018 • Bologna Masterclass Meet and debate current technology with children's publishers at the world's largest children's publishing event.

June 1-3, 2018 • AppCamp The West Coast edition of Dust or Magic, at the Asilomar Conference Grounds. \$14280/seat.

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5 (or so) sites & 10 videos

DIY

Read this column online, with links, at www.littleclickers.com/diy

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explorations
for children

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Do-It-Yourself (which is also known as DIY) has extremely popular these days. But what does that mean, exactly? To some people it might involves electronics, to thers it's cookie dough. Here are some DIY activities that are great for kids of all ages.



1. Plant a pine tree. Few things can make a bigger mark on the world than the simple act of planting a seed, especially if it's a tree. First find a pine cone. Next learn how to get the seeds from the cone. They'll need to be stored until next January, when it is a good time to plant bitly.com/2zYC32k. Next review these nine steps bitly.com/2huXVLV. Once your tree has grown up, go to #2



2. Build a Treehouse. At <https://www.wikihow.com/Build-a-Treehouse> you can find step by step instructions for building a treehouse, from finding the right tree, to making the right plans.

3. Make Chocolate Chip Cookies. First lets visit a cookbook and get a recipe bitly.com/2ymzd1e. Next watch a YouTube video and hit pause for each step. Here are two kids who are good to



follow www.youtube.com/watch?v=T71NlacyVp0

4. Make a holiday decoration First lets get some ideas from Pinterest bitly.com/2zZljbh. Next let's visit Parents magazine to see some step-by-step ornament ideas <http://www.parents.com/holiday/christmas/crafts/>

5. Decorate a plate
Start with a white ceramic plate, and then find some special markers. We found a site with step-by-step instructions for making <https://www.homedit.com/diy-baked-sharpie-plates/>



DIY on YouTube

Want more? Here's a video playlist that go along with this column

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcBVHzUUEKwnaY84Da_GngUnrLFnd9EY5





Feature Reviews and New Releases

NOVEMBER 2017

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.

AddThree

This is a math practice and drill experience tool specifically designed to help children add three digit numbers using the "crossing ten" and "regrouping" method. After a confusing tutorial screen you are given the option to take a timed drill (1, 3 or 5 minutes) or play in "I Just Want to Learn" mode with no time limit. The design is confusing, in part because it is not clear how to move to the next problem. Help is limited to hints. Our recommendation is to use with caution and supervision. You don't want to confuse children for the wrong reasons when it comes to math drill. NumberShapes apps are designed for teachers to be used in instructional settings. See also OverTen and NumberShapes Whiteboard.

Details: NumberShapes, <http://number-shapes.com/>. Price: \$free. Ages: 6-12. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: addition, subtraction, counting, base ten, math equations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 2.8 stars. Entry date: 9/6/2017. [Ellen Wolock]



Ease of Use	4	85%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	5	
Good Value	5	

Dr. Panda Plus Home Designer

This \$40 augmented reality (AR) kit combines flash cards, dry erase markers and a free app for your tablet or phone.

The mix of a quiz, a spelling game and an open-ended home designer (with smart objects that can be moved from room to room) has a high novelty effect, but the parts could be better integrated. The kit includes 12 erasable markers, 51 flashcards, and a code to activate the free-to-download app. The app runs on all just about all platforms and devices with a camera, available on Apple's App Store, Google Play, and Amazon Appstore.

Need to know: The scavenger hunt is fun at first, but grows repetitive. The drag-and-drop spelling challenges could be more responsive (e.g., the letters don't do much or "snap" into place enough) and our testers ended up just skipping this part. The best part is being able to design and color the flashcards using the markers, to see them inside your home. We would've liked it if the items you design were larger and easier to see. You can turn off the background sounds in the parent options.

Details: Dr. Panda Limited, drpanda.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android, Kindle. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, spatial relations, art, spelling, reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 10/17/2017. [buckleit]



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

Hearmuffs

Want to put your baby into a sensory deprivation chamber? This is one of three audio headsets designed to either protect and/or deliver soothing sounds to your child's ears. You might use them during a fireworks show or concert. Or perhaps to induce sleep.

There are three models:

HearMuffs (\$30) with no electronics.

HearMuffs Soothe (\$50) which allows you to speak to your child without pulling off the ear muff to be heard using voice filtering and HearMuffs Sounds (\$70) which plays four looping sounds (lullaby, babbling brook, white noise, and heartbeat). The Sooth and Sounds models are powered by two AAA batteries; and you have to remember to turn off the headset or the batteries will get used up (there is no auto-off). The interface is rather confusing and could be improved. Make sure you try them yourself to see how they sound, and don't overuse them. Remember that babies won't be able to learn how to deal with big sounds unless they encounter them.

Details: Lucid Audio, <https://lucidaudio.com/>. Price: \$50. Ages: 0-5. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: audio stimulation, parenting tool. Entry date: 10/25/2017.





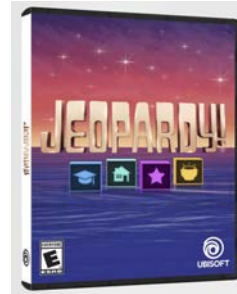
Jeopardy! and Wheel of Fortune

Coming November 7 to your Xbox One and PS4, two famous game shows. Both will be available for download individually (for \$20 each) or together for \$40.

Jeopardy! includes 2,000 clues and the ability to compete with two other friends online and through local multiplayer play. You can track your progress and performance in leaderboards by competing in Career Mode. Rapid Mode offers fewer categories and clues for players looking for a quick match, and Family Mode includes separate categories to be more inclusive and fun for kids and parents.

Jeopardy! includes 2,000 puzzles with visual and audio clues, including quotes and songs. Learn more at <http://www.ubiblog.com>.

Details: Ubisoft, www.ubisoft.com. Price: \$20 each. Ages: 10-up. Platform: PlayStation 4, Xbox One. Teaches/Purpose: memory, logic, language, trivia. Entry date: 10/10/2017.



Kidizoom Smartwatch DX2

We love it when a good product gets better (and the price stays about the same). This year's VTech watch straps a lot grownup technology into a your child's wrist. That includes two cameras, a voice recorder, pedometer, some games and, of course, a timekeeper.

Features include a 1.44 inch color touch screen, 256 MB of built in memory (1500 photos or 10 minutes of low res AVI videos). To get the photos or videos off the watch, you plug in the USB cable to see a disk called VTech 1938 on your desktop.

Parental controls let you turn on/off game play. We counted six games that include a timed maze challenge, tap the largest number and odd-one-out. The small touch screen isn't all the clear, but it is very responsive. Two cameras (one facing forward, the other for selfies) let you take stills or video. It is possible to add your own visual effects, and import content to your laptop using the USB cable. The watch's motion sensor lets you track steps or "race" against onscreen characters. Last but not least, the watch and calendar is easy to set, and there's an alarm feature.

The main weakness of the first edition of this watch (in 2014) watch was the battery. This watch is much better. It charges in about 3 hours, for up to 2 weeks of low usage time (or 1 day of heavy use). The lithium-polymer battery is charged via a micro-USB cable, which is included. VTech assumes you'll use your laptop's USB or phone charger as a power source. The bottom line? This "watch" is a lot more than a watch; and there's no Internet or data plan to worry about.

Need to know: Note that this watch is "splash proof" but not waterproof. It should not be used around a pool or bath.

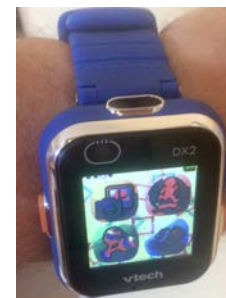
Details: VTech Electronics North America, www.vtechkids.com. Price: \$60. Ages: 4-up. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: movement, gross motor development, exercise. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 10/6/2017. [buckleit]

Little Robot Friends


These are hand-sized stationary "robots" that with sensors for touch, motion (accelerometers), light and sound. Using the free laptop app for Apple, Windows or Chrome, you can program simple behaviors using drag and drop commands.

Output options include lights (multi-color LEDs for the eyes) and sound (through a small speaker). The lithium-ion battery is charged through the included USB cable, which is also used to pass code from your laptop to the CPU. The kit includes sticker costumes. Created in Canada.

Details: Little Robot Friends, <https://littlerobotfriends.com>. Price: \$80. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Chrome, Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: programming, arduino, robotics, coding. Entry date: 10/17/2017.



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






Math Tango

Coming November 30, Math Tango is designed to playfully introduce addition and subtraction problems. This iOS (only) app combines math puzzles with "modern classroom techniques" that include classic cross-word-style activities. The challenge increases with correct answers, that also unlock friendly monsters and coins. Created by Originator Inc., makers of Endless Alphabet. A one-time in-app purchase unlocks the app forever. Standard pricing will be \$11.99, but with special 2 week pricing at launch of \$6.99.

Details: Originator, www.originatorkids.com. Price: \$free with IAP of \$12. Ages: 6-9. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: math, addition, subtraction. Entry date: 11/1/2017.



Numbie: First Grade Math

11/1/2017 This app is no longer available in the USA app store for iOS but the Android version is still available. Testers noted long load times between levels.

What is it? Designed to deliver systematic math skills, this leveled math adventure guides children through logic puzzles featuring a small animated character named Numbie.

Each level has a different theme, and subscribers get access to each level. The Parent Dashboard tracks progress. Topics include logic, sorting, ordering, addition and memorization.

The app is free to download but features in-app purchases, for example, Kindergarten Chapter 2 is available for \$9.99. There is also a monthly auto-renew subscription option which gives you access to all original content, as well as full access to all new and updated games and activities as they are released within Numbie App. The monthly subscription price of \$6.99 will be charged to your iTunes Account at confirmation of purchase, and automatically renews unless auto-renew is turned off at least 24 hours before the end of the current period. Account will be charged for renewal within 24 hours prior to the end of the current period at your current subscription level. No cancellation of the current subscription is allowed during active subscription period.

Details: Plarium Education, <http://numbie.com>. Price: \$free with IAP. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 7.0 or later), Android. Teaches/Purpose: math, classification, seriation, logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 7/6/2015. [Ellen Wolock]



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

Pokémon Playhouse

How young is too young to collect Pokémon? This app says preschool. Designed to introduce the Pokémon franchise to young screen tappers, this playful, free app let's children classify, count, collect, bathe, feed and read about 54 animated Pokémon creatures.

The experience is not especially creative and there's too much narration, and but your child will like the puzzles, and the chance to feed, groom and hatch more creatures.

The stories are well designed and they include highlighted text (touch each word to hear it read out loud) along with a simple interaction on each page. The more you play, the more eggs you hatch. There's a lot of content and we couldn't find any IAP or commercial content in this free app, making us think that motive is to broaden the reach of the Pokémon franchise. If that's the objective, this app succeeds.

Need to know: You can't control the sound, and the narrator is excessively chatty.

Details: Pokemon USA, www.pokemon.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 3-5. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android, Kindle. Teaches/Purpose: P, K. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 10/4/2017. [Ellen Wolock]



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





Sago Mini Farm

This finger-driven, side-scrolling, open-ended explore-and-tap experience full of playful farm-related items.

High in child control, this no-fail experience lets you drag, stack and interact with anything you can see. The learning is light and informal, and there's no print or spoken language. The teeter-totter works like a balance, and there's a tractor that you can load with fruit and drive around. This app features familiar Sago Mini characters like Robin. We liked how you tap a rain cloud to help the garden grow.

This virtual playset isn't very big -- if you're expecting something like Toca Life, this isn't your app -- but there's unlimited possibilities. Everything is movable and stackable

Need to know: Sago is introducing some new characters in this app -- including some chickens, cows, goats, horses, and a silly scarecrow. Works without WiFi. The app will be available Oct 26, 2017 on all mobile platforms as a stand-alone app. It is currently available in Sago Mini World (the subscription service).

Details: Sago Mini, www.sagomini.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 2-5. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: animals, the farm, causality. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 10/24/2017. [buckleit]



Ease of Use	10	96%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	



SpongeBob Challenge, The (for Amazon Alexa)

"Alexa, start SpongeBob Challenge" is the key phrase you need to say if you want to play a memory game in Bikini Bottom.

Ideal for the Amazon Dot (\$50) and other Alexa-enabled devices, this "app" is actually one of the many "skills" that you can add to your Amazon Echo using the Amazon Echo controller app. We've noticed an increasing amount of verbal driven content in the Amazon Echo menu. As a result we decided to take a closer look -- or in this case, listen. What we found is a simple direction following memory quiz that starts easy and gets progressively harder. This includes remember the details of an increasingly complicated food order, and giving the information to Mr. Krabs. This game would work well with a group. The dialog is well constructed, and musical chimes help you know when it's time to answer.

Details: Nickelodeon, www.nick.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Kindle. Teaches/Purpose: logic, language, audio processing, memory, speech. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 10/10/2017. [buckleit]



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



Stage Fright - The Monster Singing Competition

Best described as an interactive rock music video, this app gives you three musical monsters; and other 7 or so are shaded out on the main menu. Both the audio and visual production quality is good; and the music is original and catchy.

You can buy the music on music album on iTunes at www.stagefrightmonsters.com. This app was made in Germany.

Details: Nerd Communications, www.nerdcommunications.com. Price: \$free with IAP of \$2.99. Ages: 2-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: music. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 10/17/2017. [buckleit]



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



Super Mario Odyssey

This sandbox-style 3D Mario adventure is the first since 1996's Super Mario 64 and 2002's Nintendo GameCube classic Super Mario Sunshine. In the story, you join Mario to collect Moons so you can power up your airship, the Odyssey, and rescue Princess Peach from Bowser's wedding plans. This is a one or two player (co-op) exploration experience with some reading and a lot of problem solving. Unlike past Mario Bros. titles, this game is about exploring ("it's about the journey, not the destination.")

Content is delivered via Kingdoms which you visit in your ship (called the Odyssey). The game combines motion controls (e.g., flips) with traditional game mechanics, and many times you use Mario's hat as your weapon of choice. During the preview, we saw two kingdoms -- one themed after Mexico; the other New York City. This is an extremely rich game with countless play patterns. You drive, ride, jump and collect coins which you can use to purchase items.

Details: Nintendo of America, Inc., www.nintendo.com. Price: \$60. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, logic, problem solving. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 7/4/2017. [buckleit]



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