



Children's  
**TECHNOLOGY**  
REVIEW EXCHANGE

# January 2018

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**Snow Wonders**

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**So here are**  
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**Debate:**  
**Should YouTube care about**  
**children?**

*On the cover: Facebook Messenger by Facebook*

**Children's Technology Review**  
**January 2018**

Volume 26, No. 1 Issue 215

Abigail's Tales: First Day  
Bandimal\*

Circuit Conductor - Electricity  
Learning Kit  
Color Clues

Hopster TV and Learning Games  
KinderReady  
Logitow  
Puzzle Shapes - Building Blocks\*  
Raspberry Pi Smart Robot Car  
Kit  
Seed Studio Grove Zero STEM  
Starter Kit  
Vroom



*\* Denotes "Editor's Choice."*

"If you're using something for free, you are the product."

That's how Bill Shribman, Sr. Producer & Director of Digital Partnerships at WGBH ended his recent Dust or Magic talk, called "Kids, Media, News and Media Literacy."

Shribman starts with the question "what does modern media literacy need to look like in a mobile world with fake news and an endless sea of information?" The 30 minute talk can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/FDM3F9SgHx4>.



SUMMARY: In the past, you could use the "CRAP test" to tell if information was real.

C = Currency  
R = Reliability  
A = Authority  
P = Purpose/Point of View

But, Shribman asserts, these are different times, and we must help children move beyond the CRAP test. He showed us a fake Associated Press (AP) tweet that announced that there has just been an attack on the White House. Every part of the tweet could pass the CRAP test, but the tweet was created by hackers.

The bottom line is that we really don't know at what level everything that is being fed to us is being customized and/or manipulated for some reason. For example, you can find out what Facebook thinks you are, with <https://www.facebook.com/ads/preferences>



About Facebook Ads

#### LITTLECLICKERS: SNOW WONDERS

Snowflakes were falling outside our New Jersey window as we created this month's LittleClickers column about snow. Have a look at [www.littleclickers.com/snow](http://www.littleclickers.com/snow)

#### ANNOUNCING THE 2018 KAPI AWARDS

See page 4 for the winners, or visit [www.kapiawards.com](http://www.kapiawards.com)

#### YOU ASKED: SO HERE ARE 28 FAVORITE PRODUCTS FROM 2017

We summarize some trends (both good and bad) and hand pick 28 important products from the past 12 months that you need to know about. See page 5.

**Dust or Magic**

Save these dates!  
[www.dustormagic.com](http://www.dustormagic.com)

**March 25, 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. \$1480/seat.

## Children's Technology Review January 2018

Volume 26, No. 1 Issue 215

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**PUBLISHER INFORMATION** *Children's Technology Review*™ (ISSN 1555-242X) is published monthly (12 issues) by Active Learning Associates, Inc. Send address changes or new subscriptions to *Children's Technology Review*™, 126 Main Street, Flemington, NJ 08822 or [circulation@childrenstech.com](mailto:circulation@childrenstech.com). **Use of this publication for any commercial publishing activity without prior written permission is strictly prohibited.** Readers are subject to the TERMS OF USE found at <http://childrenstech.com/disclaimer>

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5 (or so) sites & 10 videos

# Snow Wonders

Read this column online, with links, at [www.littleclickers.com/snow](http://www.littleclickers.com/snow)

How many snowflakes fall every second? Is it true that no two snowflakes are alike? Ever wonder how they make artificial snow for ski resorts? Let's learn more about the wonders of snow.

**1. T/F No two snowflakes are alike.** Find the answer at [bitly.com/2Cz8yKm](http://bitly.com/2Cz8yKm) to learn from snowflake scientist Kenneth Libbrecht. He says "it's unlikely that any two large snow crystals have ever looked completely alike." But he admits, there's no way to actually find out. Who can look at every snowflake? See what a snowflake looks like at <http://www.snowcrystals.com>.



**2. Can snow keep you warm?** Yes. Freshly fallen snow is typically 90 to 95 percent air, which is what makes it a good thermal insulator. Get a sleeping bag and learn how to make a snow cave, at [bitly.com/2CDmVxm](http://bitly.com/2CDmVxm)

**3. Take a guess... how many snowflakes fall every second?** The answer is about a million-billion snowflakes, averaged over a typical year around the world. That's enough for one snowman for every person on earth, every ten minutes, according to <http://www.snowcrystals.com/facts/facts.html>

**4. What does dust and snow have in common?** According to Discover Magazine [bitly.com/2lP9lXU](http://bitly.com/2lP9lXU) there's at tiny spec of dust at the center of every snowflake. It can be anything from volcanic ash to a partical from outer space. Think about that before you eat some snow!

## 5. What are the dangers of snow?

Snow can be deadly when it blocks vision, falls on you in an avalanche <https://youtu.be/dYx9wbCsl14> or causes a heart attack when you try to shovel it [nyti.ms/2E3urhl](https://nyti.ms/2E3urhl). So be careful.



## APPLICATION

**How much water is inside of snow?** Get a jar and pack it with snow. Make a guess with bit of tape. Then melt the snow to get your answer. [bitly.com/2lRPo7d](http://bitly.com/2lRPo7d)

## Make a Snow Fish!

Everyone makes a snowman. Why not a giant snow fish that will stop traffic? Simply watch this YouTube video <https://youtu.be/fXM08IHwaKc>. You'll need some shovels, a sled and a wooden frame; plus a lot of friends. Some lighting effects and cold weather help a lot.

LittleClickers is brought to you by Computer Explorers, who offer camps on programming.

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## Snow Wonders on YouTube

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

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcBVHzUUEKwk9ao\\_hVvBtkRPIbTbmhK7](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcBVHzUUEKwk9ao_hVvBtkRPIbTbmhK7)

# 2018 KAPi Award winners



The envelope, please! Next week in Las Vegas, we'll present awards to the following products and people. Our thanks to CES and the jurors (Mark Schlichting, Chris Byrne, Barbara Chamberlin, Dan Nessel, Mary Couzin, Tonda Sellers, Amanda Gummer and especially Robin Raskin) for making this award possible. After considering over 500 products and people, here are the winners.

## Best App (Younger Children)

Sago Mini World, Sago Mini. It took a small Canadian team of designers, many of them parents themselves, to create this safe, vibrant home for the very first tech users. The unique subscription model is commercial free, and packed with updated things to discover.

## Best App (Older Children)

Messenger Kids, Facebook. Many have tried but few have succeeded to fulfill a family's desire to let their young children have access to messaging. After copious research and careful attention to privacy and permission, Facebook's powerful Messenger Kids will open a much-needed line of communication between children and parents. We applaud this type of leadership.



**Best Peripheral** Kidizoom Smartwatch DX2, VTech. Our judges agreed: the Kidizoom 2017 smartwatch bests the competition in the kid's wearable category. There's no GPS for tracking, but the two cameras, color touch screen, motion/step counter and suite of games make this affordable peripheral an ideal first watch for any child. And it tells time.

**Best Content Distribution** WOW in the World Podcast for Kids by Tinkercast on NPR. "Where does an astronaut poop?" NPR's Guy Raz and Mindy Thomas have the answer to this, and many other important questions in this podcast specifically designed to delight kids (and their parents).

**Best AR/VR Application** Merge Cube, by Merge VR. VR and AR apps and toys were easy to find this year. Tools like Apple's AR kit have created an endless stream of exciting new kids' products. Merge VR rises to the top by giving children a concrete prop that they can hold in their hands. We've seen kids lining up to try it out.

**Best Maker Product** Circuit Cubes, Tenka Labs. Simplistic fun that turns a consumer into a creator right out of the box. Unlike the other maker kits that were released this year, Circuit Cubes is designed to play well with other brands of toys, from stuffed animals to Tinker Toys to LEGOs.

**Most Creative** Beasts of Balance, Sensible Object. Jurors loved this clever balancing act (literally) between physical, stackable building parts and AR. Warning -- this game can get addicting.

**Award for Innovation** Lenovo Star Wars Jedi Challenge, Lenovo. OK, let's admit it. We all want to have our own lightsaber. Lenovo has created a combination headset, app, beacon and light saber that comes close to pulling you right into your own battle.

**Best Physical/Digital Merger** LEGO Boost, LEGO. Build one of five variations of a robot with this LEGO's kit, program it using a simple block-oriented language, and then enjoy your play session with your new interactive creation. This clever leveraging of the LEGO brand offers kids a seamless way to code, build and play.

**Best Thing that Flies** Aura Drone with Glove Controller, KD Group. We love it when a toy makes feel like you have magical powers. This drone comes with a glove that turns your hand into a motion controller. There are even haptic features so you can feel the power.

## PIONEER AWARDS

**Emerging Pioneer:** Vikas Gupta, creator of Wonder Workshop. Vikas Gupta had a perfectly lovely life as the Head of Consumer Payments at Google, but his vision of creating playmate robots that would teach kids how to code was his passion. With Dot and Dash, a robotic duo, and the new Cue, that has emotional intelligence and personality, he's taught countless kids about the joys of coding.

*A sad postscript. When all the votes were counted, Markus Persson, aka The Father of Minecraft was selected to receive the LEGEND KAPi award -- our highest honor. But we looked into his background (you can too... just search on his name and read a few of his tweets). Sadly, Mr. Persson's use of social media to bully others made us remove the award. Our conclusion is that you can be lucky, brilliant and make a great product. But if you behave badly you can't win the Pioneer KAPi.*



# You asked: So here are 28 favorites from 2017

by Warren Buckleitner



2017 will go down as the year when VR, AR, HDMI, 4K and Bluetooth LE quietly slipped from novelty to mainstream. Driven by the continual undercurrents of cheaper, faster microprocessors, our tech toys and tablets have also become cheaper and faster, and the result is more power for young hands. Said another way, \$40 in a toy store can buy a much better drone than it could last year.

These continual hardware improvements have helped to narrow the quality gap between Apple and rest (namely Google and Amazon). Consider the \$400 Acer Chromebook, with a multi-touch screen that can deliver both Google docs and Toca Boca. We liked Amazon's \$130 eight inch Fire HD Kids Edition as well, and the big leaps this year in AR (Augmented Reality) can be attributed to improved developer tools like Unity and ARKit. So from a hardware point of view, 2017 was a good year.

With power comes responsibility. We watched as profit motivated companies exploited curious children to increase traffic and their revenue. We sat in on an Apple developer event called "how to make great apps for kids" and came to understand that Apple defines "great" as increased revenue.

They know what any supermarket owner understands. Putting candy in the checkout lane increases revenue. Today's candy is free apps with IAP (In App Purchases) and spicy YouTube videos that serve up page views and ads. As a result, a parent in 2017 has to worry more than ever when their child is alone with a connected screen.

2017 was the year when a popular YouTuber (followed by many children) created a video involving a Japanese suicide victim (see the coverage from Wired, at [bitly.com/2IV3aWD](http://bitly.com/2IV3aWD)). Raul Gutierrez, CEO of Tinybop is the father of two sons. He wrote on the Children and Media Professionals Facebook page, "YouTube knows a huge portion of its audience are kids/teens and they have massive influence over what kids watch via their algorithms, but take little responsibility for effects of pushing millions of kids to algorithmically ranked garbage. **The fact that YouTube is designed as an adult site doesn't remove that responsibility.** I believe sites are responsible for their communities and their content even when it's user-created, and especially so when they have massive audiences." We agree.

And there's 2017's fake news. As Bill Shribman points out in his Dust or Magic talk, we must prepare the next generation to move beyond the "CRAP" test in order to project the basic foundations of democracy. See his talk at <https://youtu.be/FDM3F9SgHx4> to learn what the CRAP test is. Some other top line trends:

- 2017 also saw a marked decrease in the number of original, high quality children's apps, as several key publishers simply gave up in the face of a dime store app store culture that rewards free trials, subscriptions and in app purchases.
- It's becoming very common for a toy or book to have an accompanying App. That means a child will need a connected smart phone or tablet to play along creating a continued economic divide.
- Coding is hot, as are snap together electronic kits. But as Mitch Resnick warns in is Dust or Magic talk, it is important to know the difference between puzzles and powerful coding experiences. If you haven't watch his talk "Fulfilling Papert's Dream" take the time... <https://youtu.be/Ofvh3haFp9w>



- Toca Boca continues to lead, by creating fun, easy to use touch and explore experiences. The Toca Life series is perhaps the year's biggest app success story.
- Nintendo Switch was 2017's biggest hardware winner. It illustrates how user-centered design pays off. Nintendo designers were the first to successfully blur small and big screen experiences. And the device is proof that parents will happily pay \$50 for an experience they trust.

The most important observation from the past 12 months is that there are still amazing products to be found. So, for this first issue of 2018, we present both the 2018 KAPi Award winners (on the previous page) and the 28 noteworthy 2017 Editor's Choice products from the 197 we reviewed. Each has a link to the full CTREX review, if you want more information.

## Acer Chromebook Spin 11

This is an excellent, powerful, affordable option for the growing number of students who rely on Google services. Features include a hinge that lets the 11.6-inch work like a tablet and a screen that is antimicrobial. Learn more at <https://www.acer.com/ac/en/US/content/model/NX.GNJAA.002> Details: Acer of America, [www.acer.com](http://www.acer.com). Price: \$400. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Android. Teaches/Purpose: a tablet/laptop. CTREX Link (please comment): <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19717>

## Bandimal

Tricky but empowering and fun -- this sound mixing experience turns your iPad or iPhone into an eight bar mixing machine. It comes from respected app creator/musician Lucas Zanutto (see Loopimal or Miximal). After you tap an animal, you see a confusing mix board, full of controls. It's easy to make a looping mess, but the app is saved by its responsive graphics and your ability to undo whatever you do. We especially liked how the animals animated moves exactly mark the rhythms. Content includes nine animals, each with a dif-

ferent voice, a set of drum tracks, the ability to switch between loop speeds and effects. The interface was inspired by the five note thumb piano (Kalimba) which uses a pentatonic scale. Rhythmically, the app uses eight beat bars, creating a lot of right angles. As a result, there are nice overtones of mathematics. The genius of this experience is that while it is complicated, everything can be quickly reversed; making it easy to tinker and debug. The resulting musical loops can range greatly; but things tend to sound good. Work is saved automatically. Use this experience to help children discover sound/math/numerical relationships. It is an amazing musical sandbox that lets you make musical/mathematical connections as you play.

Details: Lucas Zantotto, [www.lucaszantotto.com](http://www.lucaszantotto.com). Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-9. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: music, scales, math, creativity, pitch, rhythm.

CTREX Link (please comment):

<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19779>

### Busy Shapes 2

Graduates of Busy Shapes (CTR March 2014) <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/review.php?id=17631> now have 100 additional puzzles to solve, with this second edition.

This time the puzzles are presented on 3D sliding platforms that move in front of or in back of one another. There are also trap doors, time bombs and switches that require some logical thinking, plus trial and error, in order to solve.

As with the first Busy Shapes, you can easily reset a level, with no penalties

The graphics don't have the polished look of the first Busy Shapes app, and it isn't possible for children to jump around between levels.

The puzzles are themed, featuring four worlds and the app uses multi-touch, so that children can work cooperatively on the levels. Details: Edoki Academy, [www.edokiacademy.com](http://www.edokiacademy.com). Price: \$2.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, logic, fine motor skills, problem solving.

CTREX Link (please comment):

<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19526>

### The Creature Garden

This open-ended experience lets you mix and match exotic creator parts like hooves, fins, heads, horns, wings, beaks and paws... to see them come to life. The parts can be resized for more strength for flying or swimming, for example. After you make your creature, you take it to a lab see how it works when running, swimming or flying.

The final step is a visit to the garden where you can let your critters roam to see how they interact with one another. Cross breeding is an option, and there are races. Content includes 100 parts and the ability to save creatures in your own profile.

Need to know: The art has a distinctly exotic look, created by artist Natasha Durlay.

Details: Tinybop, Inc., [www.tinybop.com](http://www.tinybop.com). Price: \$2.99. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, art, logic, storytelling, cause and effect.

CTREX Link (please comment):

<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19725>

### Dr. Panda Town

With a design similar to the Toca Life series, this is a dollhouse-style experience that lets you freely move around six rooms of the house (a kitchen, living room, bedroom, bathroom, back yard and attic). Each room is full of well selected items that do what you want them to do. You can cook a full meal in the kitchen, and feed 12 Dr. Panda characters. While the animal inspired characters look like they represent different ethnic groups, the range of



diversity is not as good as the Toca Town series.

The free app comes with 1/3 of the content unlocked. In other words, you see a house, a park and a store, but only the house is open. The other two areas are shown to children with a lock. We suggest using this app to help children understand the concept of the IAP, because it is something they will undoubtedly encounter. Thankfully the age gate is well designed, which will keep children away from accidental purchases. And if they do succeed in begging to see what's behind the locked gate, the \$2.99 is certainly not much of a risk. The other two areas are shown with locks and an age gate. The cost for the additional two units ("the Park and the Supermarket Bundle" is reasonable -- \$2.99). See also Dr. Panda School and the Toca Life series. Note that there are no voice recording features.

Details: Dr. Panda Limited, [drpanda.com](http://drpanda.com). Price: \$free with \$2.99 IAP. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android.

Teaches/Purpose: language, creativity, representational play.

CTREX Link (please comment):

<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19596>

### Dr. Panda Town: Mall

The second in the Dr. Panda Town series, this virtual Mall also has a design similar to Toca Life, offering a dollhouse-style experience that lets you freely move around to visit three floors with shops, a food court and a movie theater.

There are 16 characters and 25 outfits that can be mixed and matched. The app supports multi-touch, so children can play together. A shared map menu shows the other Dr. Panda town apps you have unlocked or may unlock in the future, making it possible for your world to grow with each download. Additional areas in Dr. Panda Town: Mall can be added via a one time in-app purchase. These permanently unlock the content for your account. There are no voice recording or movie making features.

The free app comes with 1/3 of the content unlocked. The other two areas are shown to children with a lock. See also Dr. Panda School and the Toca Life series.

Details: Dr. Panda Limited, [drpanda.com](http://drpanda.com). Price: \$free plus IAP for \$4.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, Android, Kindle.

Teaches/Purpose: creativity, representation, logic.

CTREX Link (please comment):

<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19727>

### Fiete Cats AR

Are you new to AR (Augmented Reality)? Here's a good starter experience that works well on a standard iPad (with iOS 11 installed).

First you choose from three animated kittens -- whom you can name. Next, you point your camera at a well lit, flat surface. Poof - a kitten appears. We liked how the kitten can jump from one surface in the room to another (e.g., from the table to the floor). Health and happiness meters tell you when your cat needs a bath

or wants to eat/play. And yes, there is a litter box. Need to know: As AR apps go, this one is easy to use. But it has limited play value. Your cats don't develop over time, and other than fur color, there's not much difference between the cats. And if you are expecting to meet Fiete (the sailor), you might be disappointed. He does not appear in this app.

Details: Ahoiii Entertainment UG, [www.fiete-app.com](http://www.fiete-app.com). Price: \$1.99. Ages: 4-9. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: augmented reality.  
CTREX Link (please comment):  
<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19764>

### Fiete Puzzle

There are no shortage of drag-and-drop puzzles on iPad screens. This one stands out. Not only does it feature the playful German sailor Fiete, but the puzzles are easy-of-use. In addition, they all flow together under topics that make sense to young children. The ambient sounds are also noteworthy. Content is organized into nine themes (you get two, free) each with about twenty items to match. These include zoo animals, a farm, fire vehicles, the supermarket, a campfire, a birthday party and bed time. Each item comes with an associated sound. We liked how one puzzle morphs into the next, offering a logical progression to the challenges. You can also rewind a level, to play with the scenes you've made. The app comes with two of nine levels unlocked, making it worth the download. The intuitive controls and large puzzle pieces make this a good starter app.

Details: Ahoiii Entertainment UG, [www.fiete-app.com](http://www.fiete-app.com). Price: Free, with IAP of \$1.99. Ages: 2-5. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, puzzles, fine motor skills.  
CTREX Link (please comment):  
<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19681>

### Grandma's Beach Fun

Here's a well designed app that can extend concepts related to a visit to the beach (or shore). As with other Fairlady Media apps, there's a lot of light school readiness play, mixed with the sand-related play.

You can choose rhyming words to cause airplane acrobatics, match up items under the umbrellas, go waterskiing with Grandpa, solve some coconut math, create crazy beach art, find words in a puzzle, discover wildlife in a tide pool, and make a fireworks show. Non fiction content includes beach wildlife and water sports.

Details: Fairlady Media, Price: \$2.99. Ages: 5-9. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: school readiness, math, spelling.  
CTREX Link (please comment):  
<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19677>

### 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 time-keeper. 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](http://www.vtechkids.com). Price: \$60. Ages: 4-up. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: movement, gross motor development, exercise.

CTREX Link (please comment):  
<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19742>

### Mammals

Future zoologists take note: this 9th Explorer's Library app ranks among the best of the series -- on par with the Human Body. This time you can play with the insides of five creatures to see how they play, eat, see, run, fly, grow, reproduce and feel. The tiger has a working claw, and the bat illustrates how sonar works

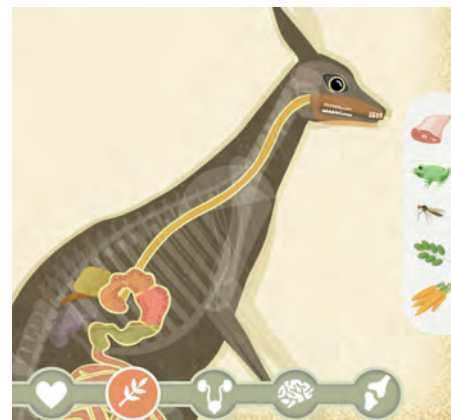
when you dangle a fly in front of it. You can "pet" the fur on each critter, and a vision lab lets you see through the eyes of each creature, thanks to your camera and a night/day mode. It turns out that elephants don't see very well. A racetrack makes it easy to compare the top speeds of each animal (although, as CTREX expert Gail Lovely notes the size scale is incorrect). All of the animals can be displayed as cross sections illustrating their bones, muscles, nerves and digestion system. And yes, they all poop, as long as you feed them the right type of food. The information is expertly presented via gore-free illustrations.

Mammals is the ninth in Tinybop's Explorer's Library. Other titles include The Human Body, Plants, Simple Machines, The Earth, Weather, Homes, Skyscrapers, and Space.

Need to know: CTREX Expert made some good points. Gail Lovely questioned the definition of "mammal" when applied to the bat and kangaroo (the latter being a marsupial). Claudia Haines (a librarian and CTREX expert) was happy to see the landscape mode, but would like more animals to explore. Tinybop has promised that the Sloth (which is shown in the main menu) is coming, and the Elephant will soon have a baby.

The bottom line -- this is a powerful, responsive biology lesson that successfully makes big ideas accessible. Apps like this are the reason you paid \$500 for your iPad (there is no Android version). Details: Tinybop, Inc., [www.tinybop.com](http://www.tinybop.com). Price: \$2.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: science, biology, mammals, food, digestion, medicine, health.

CTREX Link (please comment):  
<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19601>





### Math Tango

Explore a playful, animated island that is home to a family of friendly musical monsters. Your objective: to earn money and monster crystals by solving well designed addition and subtraction puzzles. The coins are used to purchase items for your island. Content includes 25 monsters, 24 missions and 50 store items that enhance the dance show, that can be added to your island. Progress is bookmarked automatically. Puzzles are not leveled, but there's a nice variety of math problems, making it harder for more than one child to play. The challenge increases with correct answers. Multi-touch is employed for some of the games. Created by Originator Inc., the makers of Endless Alphabet. The teaser download is free and children are shown locked items that lead to a form for a one-time in-app purchase. This unlocks the app forever.

Details: Originator, [www.originatorkids.com](http://www.originatorkids.com). Price: \$free with IAP of \$12. Ages: 6-9. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: math, addition, subtraction (single and double digit problems). CTREX Link (please comment): <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19754>

### Messenger Kids

Combining ease of use and power, this app -- which functions outside of Facebook, lets children (under 13 years-of-age) share text messages, photos, animated gifs and videos with (hopefully) parent-approved Facebook contacts.

The app opens a new COPPA (Children's Online Privacy and Protection Act) compliant service; and a powerful social pipeline so that younger family members can communicate with others who are on Facebook. In fact, if you currently use a Facebook account, you are already using Messenger Kids, because it piggy-backs on existing Messenger features.

This is a welcome addition for any Facebook using family. It combines ease of use with powerful communication features, and no data plan is required. No system is completely foolproof, and that it is possible for a child to create a fake account to grant permission to him/herself. Learn more at more information, visit <http://messengerkids.com>.

Details: Facebook, Inc., [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). Price: \$free. Ages: 9-11. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: social networking, language, literacy, parent/child interaction. CTREX Link (please comment): <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19775>

### Miffy's World

Freely explore Miffy the child rabbit's home in this gentle, easy-to-use starter experience. You tap on Miffy's house to get started. He (she?) then follows your finger, as you move from room to room, exploring to cook, take a bath, dress up or play with blocks. You can also go outside to play fetch with a pet dog, or plant and water seeds to plants that show up, later in recipes or for decorations. This app grows with you... the more you explore the more you discover. We liked how you can control the volume, toggle between languages, and that everything you can touch does something. At random intervals, a random surprise shows up by the door, offering a new toy or outfit. There's always something to do -- you can pick fruit from a tree, decorate a cake, use a the toilet or take a bath. It is possible to toggle between six languages in the iOS version, including English, Dutch, German, French, Spanish and Japanese. Miffy's World features the 1955 Dick Bruna cartoon character, and the app is based on the Nick Jr. TV series Miffy's Adventures: Big and Small. This app was designed StoryToys, by the creators of My Very Hungry Caterpillar. Need to know -- this is a one-player experience. Operation is extremely easy although Miffy can be less than graceful to clumsy to move around. Testers noted the traditional male/female character depiction with the

parents (mom cooks, dad works in the garden).

Details: StoryToys, [www.storytoys.com](http://www.storytoys.com). Price: \$3.99. Ages: 2-7. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, logic, representational play, taking care of personal needs, . CTREX Link (please comment): <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19591>

### Monument Valley 2

Ready for some applied 3D geometry and problem solving? If you liked the original game in 2014, you won't be disappointed by Monument Valley 2. This time you help Ro as she teaches her child about the mysteries of the valley. You tap on the parts of a 3D maze to guide a mother and her child the maze of architecture, as the hidden pathways unfold in front of you. This is a standalone adventure with a new story. You don't need to have previously played Monument Valley. Like the first edition, this app is addicting, beautiful and leveled perfectly to keep you challenged (and confused). Content includes ten new optical illusion maze puzzles that are ideal for a child in need of a challenge. There's no shortage of visual surprises -- enough to keep you coming back to these puzzles, even after you've mastered them. There's no hint system, and you can't jump to a harder level. You can also share screen captures of your puzzles.

Details: Ustwo Games, [www.ustwo.com](http://www.ustwo.com). Price: \$4.99. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: logic, math, spatial relations, art, mechanics, optical illusions. CTREX Link (please comment): <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19661>

### My Very Hungry Caterpillar AR

Now you can bring the caterpillar into your living room (classroom or library) with this AR (Augmented Reality) edition of My Very Hungry Caterpillar. Teachers and librarians -- plug the app into a big screen to let the caterpillar loose during your story time. AR means that the computer generated graphics are layered over the images captured by your iPad's camera, in real time, giving the illusion that the caterpillar's world exists in your world. After a bit of experimentation (moving your tablet around to find spot in the room), our testers got the concept, feeding apples and pears to their caterpillar to see it fatten up and eventually turn into a butterfly that flaps around your room. Besides to cool visual effects, there's not much else to do with this app. Those looking for a narrative structure will be disappointed. Our testers ran out of things to do after exploring the toy chest. This app would be a nice addition to the existing My Very Hungry Caterpillar app. As a standalone experience however, it offers a high novelty effect with little lasting play value. The app was made using Apple's ARKit, which means it won't work unless you are using iOS System 11 or newer on your device. Compatible devices are iPhone 6s and 6s Plus, iPhone 7 and 7 Plus, iPhone SE, iPad Pro (9.7, 10.5 or 12.9), iPad (2017).

Details: StoryToys, [www.storytoys.com](http://www.storytoys.com). Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, augmented reality. CTREX Link (please comment): <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19734>

### Nintendo Switch Game Console

They say that good things come in small packages. In this case, Nintendo managed to shoehorn nearly all of the power of the Wii U into a single book-sized screen with two tiny controllers. The only thing missing is the CD-ROM drive, and the ability to play your library of Wii or Wii U disks. Switch software will come on cartridges that you buy in stores. You'll also be able to download titles. The two, tiny controllers are modern marvels -- packing controls, haptic feedback and motion control technology into a



device that fits in your hand. Librarians note that they could be easily lost or stolen (one Nintendo staffer recommended installing RFID stickers on the controllers, along with an alarm system). Details: Nintendo of America, [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com). Price: \$300. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: a video game console and handheld system.

CTREX Link (please comment):

<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19529>

### Old Man's Journey

This innovative, beautifully illustrated and designed fiction app lets you navigate through a bitter-sweet story by placing markers in various locations on the screen. To move forward, you shift chunks of the landscapes -- displayed using a parallax illustration style -- to form bridges. This requires problem solving and planning. You may have to find an alternative path around a waterfall, or coax some sheep out of the way. The space relationships in this app are subtle and interesting, and they are expertly woven into the narrative elements. But the end goal -- to help an old man through his journey through a lifetime of memories, is worth the effort. Created in Austria by Felix Bohatsch of Broken Rules. Demonstrated at Dust or Magic AppCamp 17 as a "nice touch" by Lance Harris. Caution -- if you're an old man, this story will make you cry.

Details: Broken Rules, [www.brokenrules.es](http://www.brokenrules.es). Price: \$4.99. Ages: 9-up. Platform: iPad, Android, Steam. Teaches/Purpose: logic, human development, art, creativity, spatial problem solving.

CTREX Link (please comment):

<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19668>

### Puppet Pals Storybooks: Commander Amazing

Here's another well designed Puppet Pals Storybook, with a new comic book illustration style. You can paste your face onto the main characters, Jib Jab style, capturing up to ten expressions for each character using your camera. The characters are then used to animate the story. Face profiles are saved using iCloud, and are available across all Polished Play books. Many of the screens have simple but fun mini-games. In all cases the interactive features add to the story.

As of May 2017, there are 3 stories: Commander Amazing, Centaur Quest and The Garden Guardian.

This is a highly recommended creativity and language experience. Details: Polished Play, [www.polishedplay.com](http://www.polishedplay.com). Price: \$2.99. Ages: 6-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, writing, language.

CTREX Link (please comment):

<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19657>

### Puzzle Shapes - Building Blocks

This clean, easy-to-use collection of 3D puzzles start easy and progressively get harder. We especially liked how you can rotate the shapes with a swipe to see how they look from different angles. In addition, each puzzle challenge becomes part of a larger object, giving the classification task context and meaning. Record keeping lets you see what your child has done, and you can quickly jump between puzzles. This app would work well in a preschool or library setting. Content includes four game modes and 200 levels. The first levels are free. Later levels are available as an IAP. This app comes from Germany, from the makers of Tiny Pirates. Details: wonderkind GmbH, <http://wonderkind.de>. Price: \$free with IAP of \$3.99. Ages: 2-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone.

Teaches/Purpose: sorting, classification, logic, 3D shapes.

CTREX Link (please comment):

<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19783>



### 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. It is currently available in Sago Mini World (the subscription service).

Details: Sago Mini, [www.sagomini.com](http://www.sagomini.com). Price: \$2.99. Ages: 2-5.

Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: animals, the farm, causality.

CTREX Link (please comment):

<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19751>

### 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](http://www.nintendo.com). Price: \$60. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, logic, problem solving.

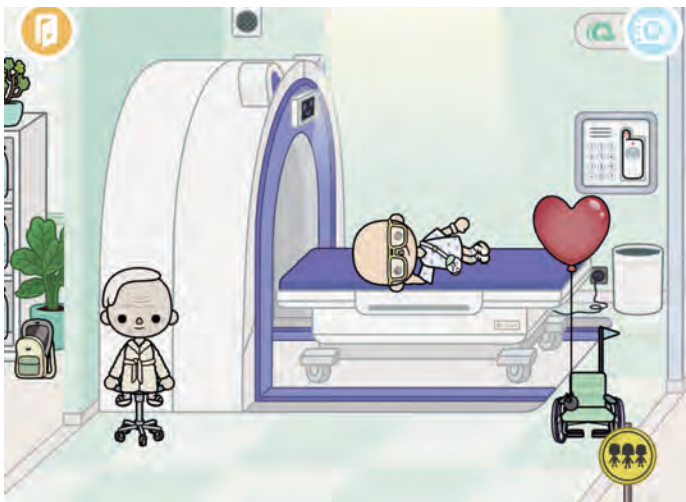
CTREX Link (please comment):

<http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19680>

### Teachley: Fractions Boost

Hands on math pedagogy comes to the racetrack. You drive by tilting your screen like a steering wheel, to try to drive your car through a gate, using a fraction clue as your key.

For example, if you are given a target fraction of  $\frac{1}{2}$ , you must hit the gate in the center. If you miss, you are given a set of well designed tutorials that illustrate how fractions work. This app is especially good for fraction drill. It is backed by intelligent pedagogy that quickly rewards mastery, and supports the building of understanding. There's a school version of the app that syncs with classroom accounts, letting you personalize the experience. Need to know: Turn off the looping music in the teacher's settings. Details: Teachley, LLC, [www.teachley.com](http://www.teachley.com). Price: \$3.99. Ages: 8-11. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: math, fractions, denominators, numerators. CTREX Link (please comment): <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19691>



### **Toca Life: Hospital**

Who wouldn't want to play with a CT scanner? This is a sandbox style experience that gives children a toolbox for exploring the items they might encounter in a real hospital. It is the seventh Toca Life app we've reviewed, and one of the best. The five story hospital has themed floors, each with hundreds of items that can be dragged and dropped onto a cast of 25 characters. The designers did a good job replicating a hospital with authentic-sounding machines. You can explore the operating room, stop by the waiting room, or eat a snack at the café. You can put patients onto a gurneys where you can try on bandages, crutches, hospital beds and wheelchairs. Hospitals are an important part of life, and they often involve strong feelings. This app can be an excellent tool for helping children (and adults) explore these ideas, in a way that is high in child control. See also My Playhome Hospital. Details: Toca Boca, <http://tocaboca.com/>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 4-12. Platform: iPad, Android, Kindle. Teaches/Purpose: social studies, language, creativity, hospitals, verbal skills. CTREX Link (please comment): <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19620>

### **Toca Life: Office**

Freely explore six job locations where you can cook food, pretend print documents, put people in jail and so on. If you've used any previous Toca Life apps, you get the idea of this version -- simply tap one of the six locations that include a bank, an office, a rooftop, a courthouse, an apartment and a daycare. There are 35 new gender and ethnically mixed characters that you can use as props in a video puppet show, that you can export to your photo library. There are hidden features to discover in this edition, including hidden costumes that can convert characters into superheroes. You can keep valuables in the bank vault and set the alarm to keep

them secure. Need to know: Reset everything using the restore icon on the main menu. This is an excellent language stimulation experience... children will encounter many everyday items that they will want to talk about. Details: Toca Boca, <http://tocaboca.com/>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 6-9. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, spatial relations, language, representational play. CTREX Link (please comment): <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19729>

### **Toca Life: Pets**

This Toca Life app is packed with all kinds of pets -- 124 to be exact. They're hiding everywhere: behind doors, on shelves and in fish tanks. We noticed they poop a lot; and that you can play with the poop, a process that might be disturbing to some. You can even feed the poop to the people. While no animals appear to be harmed in this app, it is possible to put your kitten on a hot stove, or your dog in the freezer. Hence the curse, and blessing of an open-ended experience. Unlike some of the other Toca Life apps, it is not possible to move from one area to another through a door or elevator. Instead, you must move back to the main menu. There are five locations: pet park, pet hotel, veterinary, pet shop and breeder's bungalow, and all items can be moved to any location. Content includes 23 new characters. You can bathe muddy pets and get them clean again, or pretend to be a vet and care for sick or injured pets. The pets can be dressed up in fun hats. By building an agility course you can exercise your pet. Pets include a pet rock and sloth bat that were inspired by drawing and photos from fans. This is another excellent addition to the Toca Life series.

Details: Toca Boca, <http://tocaboca.com/>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 6-9. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, spatial relations, language, representational play. CTREX Link (please comment): <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19774>

### **We ARGH Pirates!**

Fun, goofy and full of a variety of logic challenges, this beautifully illustrated adventure contains eight levels that effectively challenge your problem solving skills. While not perfect (some of the puzzles could use some better hints), this app is the best overall problem solving apps we've reviewed in 2017. You help a crew of pirates move through each area of a treasure map, defeating challenges presented by a variety of enemies. You aim a bow and arrow to shoot down coconuts, Angry Birds style, or swipe to get your ship over rocks. In one screen, you shoot barrels at a giant squid. Each level has some type of logic or memory puzzle. The map/menu makes it easy to jump around in the game, although it is not possible to reset the app, and we couldn't find any options to control sound or adjust levels. No reading is required. The audio nicely accompanies the creative challenges.

There's no shortage of cartoon violence in this app, and some of the characters may have stereotyped appearances typical of the pirate genre. We'll be curious to see what the KIDMAP reviewers have to say.

Details: Avokiddo, [www.avokiddo.com](http://www.avokiddo.com). Price: \$3.99. Ages: 6-10. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android, Kindle. Teaches/Purpose: logic, memory, classification. CTREX Link (please comment): <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19756>

### **Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild**

If you've liked Zelda in the past, you'll find release to be the best yet. Why? The illustrations in this open air adventure are beautiful, and there is a vast area to freely explore, over and over again. As you climb towers and mountains, you battle enemies and hunt



for food, collecting food and elixirs needed to sustain the journey. Content includes 100 "Shrines" scattered around the worlds, each with different types of puzzles. Some involve realistic physics, and some will require you to harness the power of nature, including electricity, wind, fire, and more. Battling enemies requires strategy – The world is inhabited with enemies of all shapes and sizes. Each one has its own attack method and weaponry, so you must think quickly and develop the right strategies to defeat them.

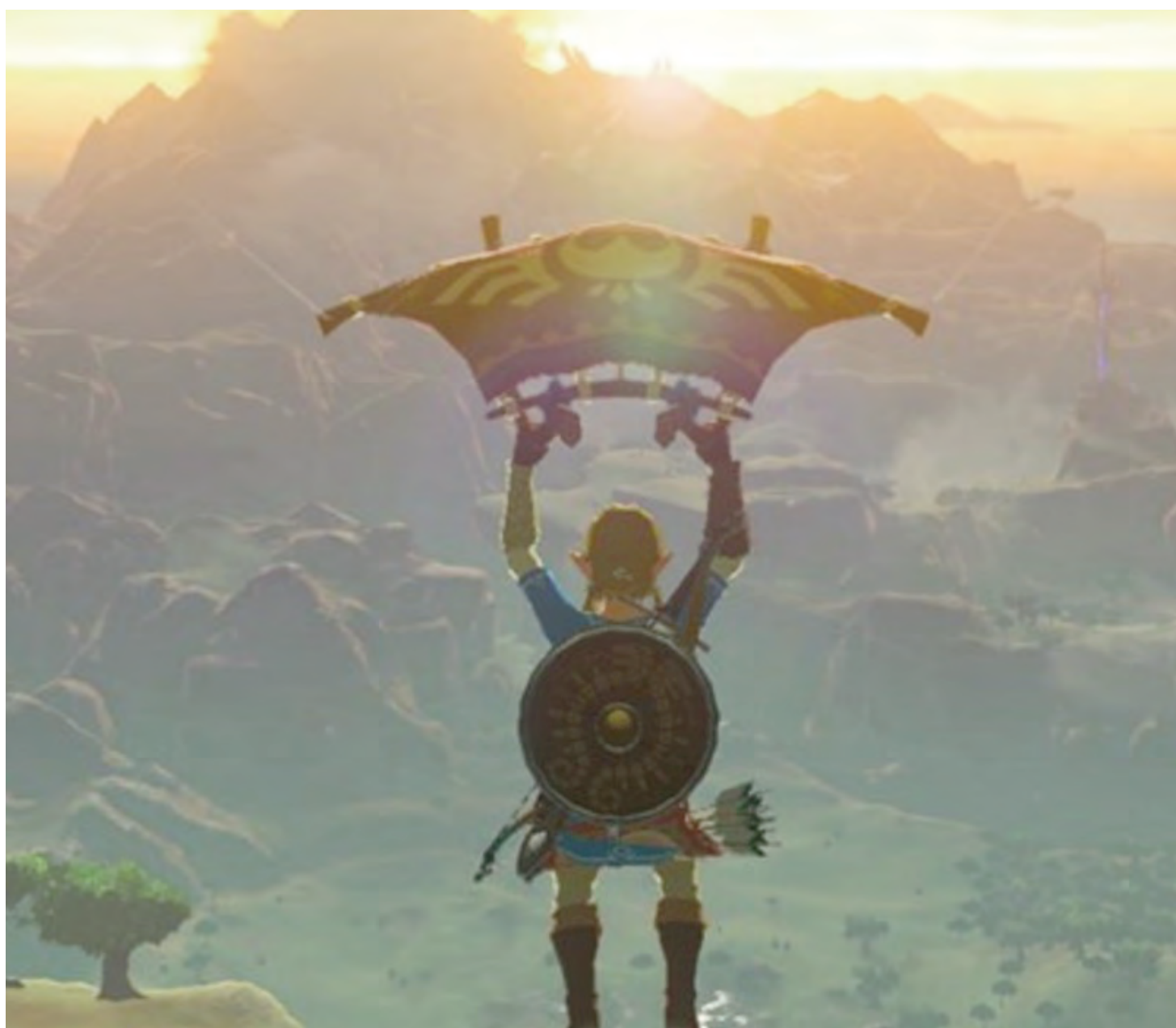
This edition of Zelda has amiibo compatibility – The Wolf Link amiibo from Twilight Princess HD, the Zelda 30th Anniversary series amiibo, and The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild series amiibo are all compatible with this game. You can tap the Wolf Link amiibo (sold separately) to make Wolf Link appear in the game. Wolf Link will attack enemies on his own and help you find items you're searching for. Tap a Zelda 30th Anniversary series amiibo to receive helpful in-game items or a treasure chest.

Learn more at [www.zelda.com/breath-of-the-wild](http://www.zelda.com/breath-of-the-wild). The bottom line? This game costs a lot, but it's worth it.

Details: Nintendo of America, [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com). Price: \$50. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch, Wii U. Teaches/Purpose: logic, maps, spatial relations, problem solving.

CTREX Link (please comment): <http://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/fullreview.php?id=19530>

*That's all folks! Please use the CTREX links to exchange your thoughts on these products, or better yet, fill out a rubric to leave a rating. If you feel we've missed something or notice an error, contact us by email ([info@childrenstech.com](mailto:info@childrenstech.com)).*





# Feature Reviews and New Releases

JANUARY 2018

*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.*

## Abigail's Tales: First Day

This is a story delivered via app (made with Unity). You swipe to read each page, and the text is highlighted.

The story (text from the publisher): "It's the first day of second grade and Abigail wakes up dreading it! She has a list of worries and has developed a severe case of the "butterflies." The butterflies circle about as she ventures to school to meet her classmates and teacher for the first time. But with some helpful advice from her mom and a few familiar faces from last year, Abigail's day turns out to be fun and exciting. Come join Abigail and her friends to find out how she copes with the twists and turns of her busy day!"

Two rudimentary games (concentration and word matching) help reinforce vocabulary, but are not integrated with the story.

Details: Dabster Entertainment, <http://dabsterent.com>. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 6-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, getting ready for school. Entry date: 1/2/2018.



## Bandimal

Tricky but empowering and fun -- this sound mixing experience turns your iPad or iPhone into an eight bar mixing machine. It comes from respected app creator/musician Lucas Zanotto (see Loopimal or miximal).

After you tap an animal, you see a confusing mix board, full of controls. It's easy to make a looping mess, but the app is saved by its responsive graphics and your ability to undo whatever you do. We especially liked how the animals animated moves exactly mark the rhythms. Content includes nine animals, each with a different voice, a set of drum tracks, the ability to switch between loop speeds and effects.

The interface was inspired by the five note thumb piano (Kalimba) which uses a pentatonic scale. Rhythmically, the app uses eight beat bars, creating a lot of right angles. As a result, there are nice overtones of mathematics.

The genius of this experience is that while it is complicated, everything can be quickly reversed; making it easy to tinker and debug. The resulting musical loops can range greatly; but things tend to sound good. Work is saved automatically.

Need to know: Use this experience to help children discover sound/math/numerical relationships. It is an amazing musical sandbox that lets you make musical/mathematical connections as you play. Designed to work with iPads and iPhones with iOS 10 or later.

Details: Lucas Zanotto, [www.lucaszanotto.com/](http://www.lucaszanotto.com/). Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-9. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: music, scales, math, creativity, pitch, rhythm. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 12/6/2017. []



Ease of Use	7	92%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	







## Circuit Conductor - Electricity Learning Kit

This is (another) snap together circuit building kit, featuring 12 function blocks for sound, LEDs and motors). An associated app lets you "see" the circuit flow in real time, a process that is less than easy to do. As you build, you can unlock harder challenges.

Details: Pia Technology, <http://www.edu.pai.technology/>. Price: \$70. Ages: 8-12. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: STEM, electricity, circuits. Entry date: 12/6/2017.



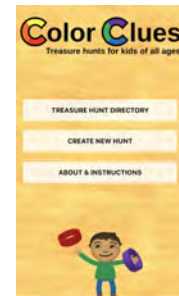
## Color Clues

Turn your phone or tablet into a multistep scavenger hunt, where the clues are delivered by way of prerecorded audio clues that you record for your child on your phone or tablet. The app is uses paper color strips that you need to print, cut and color, unless you have a color printer. Each strip has a sequence of four colors that acts like a combination lock. If you find one, say under a pillow, you have to tap the color sequence in order to unlock the verbal recorded clue. The UI (User Interface) on this app could be improved. Setting up the app a hunt requires making a profile for your child and filling out a form, recording each step. There are some templates with pre-made generic questions that you can modify; or you can start from scratch to create a custom hunt. This takes a bit of work and creativity which is the genius of this app. Treasure hunts can be uploaded to an online database, where other users can download and use those hunts themselves.

Need to know: be prepared from a lot of prep and setup before.

(Thanks to Tamera at the Erikson TEC center for recommending this app).

Details: Jesse Foote, [www.colorclues.com](http://www.colorclues.com). Price: \$free. Ages: 4-10. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: logic, memory, listening. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 12/12/2017. []



Ease of Use	6	80%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	10	



## Hopster TV and Learning Games

Created in the UK, Hopster is subscription-based video/book and game service for young children. One of the games is called "Alphabet Hotel" which was submitted to us for review. While this particular activity is well designed, it is important to review it in the context of the entire service.

In each room of the "Hotel" kids will meet a new letter or sound. They can then play with the sounds via four mini-games. These include:

- Letter Trace - In this activity, kids are presented with a large letter, and shown how to write it using their fingers
- Letter Find - Kids are presented with 11 balloons and are asked to pop the ones with the corresponding letter of the room on them. The balloons make the letter sound when the user taps directly on them and pops them.
- Letter Objects - The user must tap three interior objects in the room that begin with the designated letter of the room. The name of the object will be announced to reinforce the letter object correspondence
- Missing Letters - This activity requires children to drag and drop the correct letter into the missing slot to complete a word. This simple exercise is aimed at getting kids to start using the letters to build a word

Alphabet Hotel will be housed initially on a learning hub on the main screen of the Hopster app, in Hopster School. Here, as well as trying the new game, kids will find a number of learning shows, all selected to further their understanding of sounds and letters. The shows include -

- Phonics School - This animated series teaches kids letter recognition, letter-sound association and shape tracing. The show makes phonics interesting by having likeable characters and creative storylines

- Alphabet Stories - This show introduces little ones to the alphabet. Each episode teaches kids a new letter through a funny story that will set off their imaginations

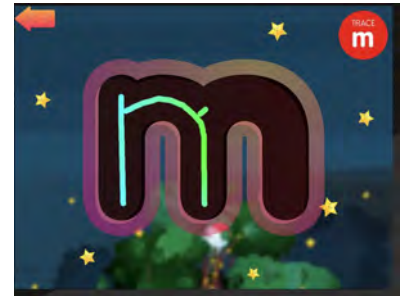
- Abadas - Ella the fox, Harry the hippo, and Seren the bat take kids on a magical adventure as they try to figure out the meaning of a new word in each episode
- Reading Rainbow Storytime - Reading Rainbow makes children excited about reading and encourages them to pick up a book. They can discover an exciting new story in each episode, read by LeVar Burton

- Signed Stories - Signed Stories brings together a collection of the best fairy tales accompanied by narration and sign language. These classic stories are perfect to encourage kids' critical thinking and to build their vocabulary

- Two Minute Tales - Based on the much-loved Grimm's fairy tales, Two Minute Tales tells 10 different stories in a new way. This Hopster original production is designed to stimulate young minds and encourage children to discover the joy of stories, books, and reading

Alphabet Hotel will be free to try for a limited period on the Hopster app, found on the Apple App Store and Google Play for download. To find out more, check out [www.hopster.tv](http://www.hopster.tv)

Details: Hopster, [www.hopster.tv](http://www.hopster.tv). Price: \$6.99/month. Ages: . Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: . Entry date: 11/13/2017.



## KinderReady

How'd you like to get a daily text message from a Kindergarten teacher, with advice about how to help your preschooler get ready for school? This is an iOS specific app (that leverages the power of your Apple Notification system) that generates daily notifications to remind you to do things like count those stairs, go on hunts for shapes and talk about letters during your day. No extra materials are needed. We liked how the app reminds parents that "children bloom at different times in different areas. Some activities might be too hard, and some too easy. Feel free to modify them as needed." The app is intended to help parents playfully expose children to topics that will be taught in a typical kindergarten.

Details: KinderReady, <https://www.facebook.com/kinderreadyapp/>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 4-6. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: kindergarten readiness. Entry date: 10/30/2017.

October 30

Look at the whole alphabet together. Identify all the letters that have straight lines, dots, curvy lines, bubbles, horizontal lines, etc.

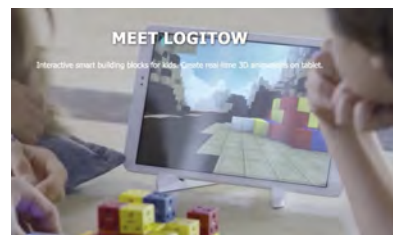




## Logitow

This is an "Instant Mixed Reality Experience" where plastic snap together blocks become on-screen animations in real time. Works with iOS and Android.

Details: Paracra (Shenzhen) Technology Co., Ltd, [www.paracra.com](http://www.paracra.com). Price: \$call. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: creativity. Entry date: 12/18/2017.



## Puzzle Shapes - Building Blocks

This clean, easy-to-use collection of 3D puzzles start easy and progressively get harder. We especially liked how you can rotate the shapes with a swipe to see how they look from different angles. In addition, each puzzle challenge becomes part of a larger object, giving the classification task context and meaning. Record keeping lets you see what your child has done, and you can quickly jump between puzzles. This app would work well in a preschool or library setting. Content includes four game modes and 200 levels. The first levels are free. Later levels are available as an IAP.

This app comes from Germany, from the makers of "Tiny Pirates."

Details: wonderkind GmbH, <http://wonderkind.de>. Price: \$free with IAP of \$3.99. Ages: 2-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: sorting, classification, logic, 3D shapes. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 12/13/2017. []



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



## Raspberry Pi Smart Robot Car Kit

This robotic car is based around the 3rd generation (or newer) Raspberry Pi. Depending on how it is programmed, it has speech recognition that you can use to control it's motors, lights and sounds. An optical sensor makes it possible to follow a dark line, and ultrasonic sensors make obstacle avoidance possible. Extra GPIO ports are free for further expansion. Learn more at <https://www.sunfounder.com/raspberry-pi-smart-robot-car.html>

Details: Sunfounder, [www.sunfounder.com](http://www.sunfounder.com). Price: \$139. Ages: 8-up. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: robotics, electronics, Scratch, programming. Entry date: 11/22/2017.

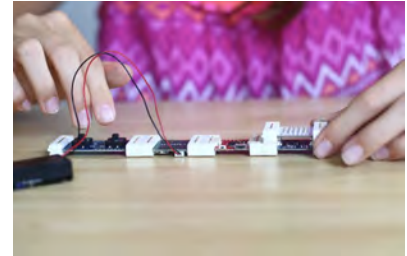




## Seeed Studio Grove Zero STEM Starter Kit

A set of snap together electronics modules (like LittleBits), designed to encourage play with electronics, design thinking and logic. The modules are plug-and-play and can be programmed using a laptop by way of a free app, or bying using Microsoft MakeCode (a block-based system). The blocks can be snapped together. Learn more at <https://www.seeedstudio.com/edu/grove-zero>

Details: Seeed Technology Co., Ltd., [www.seeedstudio.com](http://www.seeedstudio.com). Price: \$100. Ages: 8-12. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: STEM, logic, electronics, circuits. Entry date: 11/21/2017.



## Vroom

Amazon wants to put a parenting coach into your home with its Echo and Vroom, a new skill. Vroom also runs on mobile devices. Funded by the Bezos Foundation, the objective is to "fuel children's early learning and development by empowering parents to transform existing moments into brain-building opportunities." Vroom appears to collaborate with groups that sell baby products such as diaper makers and Amazon's baby registry. So -- besides the good willed intentions of building babies brains, there could also be the objective of building a baby goods empire. After all, Echo is a new, ever-listening device that has a lot of new potential. You can make your own conclusions.

The skill is optimized for the Amazon Echo Spot and Echo Show (with video content). The tips are customized to the age of your child, and include suggestions for parents to enrich daily activities like cooking or cleaning. The free app, called Vroom Daily runs on iOS and Android (and Amazon tablets) and pushes daily age appropriate tips to your device. The curriculum of Vroom centers around five generic parenting strategies: look, follow, chat, take turns and stretch. These easy-to-understand steps are behind all the brain building. They are also used in many tried and true adult/child interaction styles common in most constructivist-inspired curricula like High Scope. Learn more at [www.joinvroom.org](http://www.joinvroom.org).

Details: Amazon.com, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Price: \$free. Ages: 2-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android, Kindle. Teaches/Purpose: a parenting tool. Entry date: 12/11/2017.

