We played the new

Zelda!

Nintendo's six simple, magical ingredients

On the cover: the new graphic look of *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening*

Children's Technology Review
EDITOR'S CHOICE
20 19
FOR EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN

* Denotes "Editor's Choice."

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"It's the little things that make this game for me." Chris Guest, after playing **The Legend of Zelda Link's Awakening**

NINTENDO'S INGREDIENTS OF MAGIC
Imagine -- paying $60 for a single app. That's unimaginable in the world "free" and "paid" apps. Yet lots of people do, and the result is an interactive media empire called Nintendo that shows no sign of slowing down.

Last week, I attended Nintendo's post-E3 demo session in NYC with Chris Guest, a digital designer and former TCNJ student. He and I were given free access to the 2019 headliner titles, featured in this issue. At one point in the Zelda demo, Chris wandered into the shop, grabbed a shovel and dashed out the front door without paying. It was a trick he had learned from his youth and he was thrilled that the new Zelda title supported this type of mischief. Here are six attributes of Nintendo's success that are often lacking in today's app stores.

"You can steal from the shop!"

1. **Trust.** You spend a lot, but you get a lot. Your $60 investment in a Zelda game gives you the keys to a world engineered to be explored rather than mastered. And you own it forever with little or no commercial pressure.
2. **Freedom.** The 2019 Pokémon and Zelda games we played contain open world features. If you can see it, you can go there. In Zelda's case, these worlds contain dynamic events inspired from the natural world.
3. **Surprises.** As you wade through the weeds, you never what might pop up. These games expertly use intermittent reinforcement to keep you engaged in the task at hand. Other app stores use these techniques to manipulate player behavior for commercial reasons, which can erode trust.
4. **Collections.** Pokémon capitalizes on your innate desire to collect virtual and real stuff. But you do more than collect -- you form relationships with the creatures you collect. Nintendo's growing Amiibo collection works in concert with the game design to add features that seem worth the investment.
5. **Goals.** The new map feature in Zelda and the health meters in Pokémon deliver honest in-game information so you can use your energy to work on challenging tasks.
6. **Socialization.** Games like Super Smash Bros. are designed to be shared, such as in eSports tournaments. Other games like Pokémon Sword and Pokémon Shield and Luigi's Mansion 3 feature the best of turn-based or co-op play modes.

As the next generation of adults work to use technology to improve the quality of a child's play, it's nice to know that there are some master teachers on the job, in this case from Japan.

COMING SOON: CTREX 6.0
As you've been enjoying your summer, CTREX programmer Matt DiMatteo has been hard at work rebuilding the CTREX database. Over the next few weeks, look for the ability to view and use multiple rubrics on the same product, smarter searching and more features for our CTREX expert reviewers. We'll let you know when the changes are live.

Dust or Magic

Save the Date!
www.dustormagic.com

Nov 3-5, 2019 • Institute The 19th Annual fall institute is on the books.

Your Subscription is Your Key to 13,147 Archived Reviews
Your paid $60 subscription to *CTR* includes exclusive password access to the **CTREX** database — a collection of reviews going back to 1985. If you've lost or forgotten your password, please call 908-284-0404 between 9-3 PM EST.

Feature Reviews and New Releases

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.

Itty Bitty City

This is an Arduino-based Lego-compatible snap-together project kit for beginners. There are eight projects that can be controlled by connecting the controller block to a computer using a USB port. Learn more at http://microduinoinc.com/products/mcookie/ibc/

Details: Microduino, https://www.microduino.cc/. Price: $130. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Chrome. Teaches/Purpose: and educators looking to learn or teach electronics and programming. Entry date: 8/8/2017.
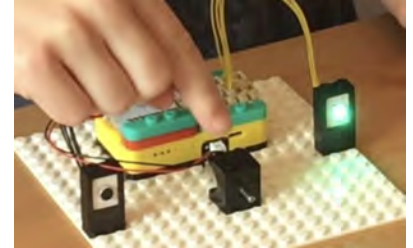
Procreate

If you have an iPad Pro and an Apple Pencil get this powerful, serious raster-based drawing experience. It's ideal for an older child or adult who likes to sketch or draw, and has all the features for visual creativity that you'd want. These include layers, copy/paste/edit and some vector font features. The Gallery makes it easy to save or share your work in many formats. These include a replay mode that lets you create full length or 30 second time-lapse videos in up to 4K resolution. Content includes 136 brushes, 64-bit smudge sampling, 250 levels of undo and redo, continuous auto-save, the ability to crop and resize, layer and clipping masks, layers with grouping options, 17 layer blend modes, RGB color matching, perspective, isometric, 2D, and symmetry visual guides and the ability to import or export Adobe Photoshop PSD files. The gallery menu gives you one step exporting ability to AirDrop, iCloud Drive, Photos, iTunes, Twitter, Dropbox, Google Drive, Facebook, Weibo and Mail. You can also export work as a layered native .procreate file, PSD, TIFF, transparent PNG, multi-page PDF or JPG. There are no subscriptions, but there are some IAP for additional features.

Details: Savage, https://procreate.art/. Price: $9.99. Ages: 9-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: art, creativity, digital design. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 6/11/2019. []

Ease of Use	8	96	%
Educational	10		
Entertaining	10		
Design Features	10		
Good Value	10		

Super Mario Maker 2

It's now been four years since the first Mario Maker sandbox builder. This new version gives you more sharing features and expands the possibilities for your games.

Features include new course parts and tools; a single-player story mode with 100 Nintendo-created courses, more themes, online course sharing, an ON/OFF Switch to swap the red and blue blocks, a water level feature and a co-op mode for game sharing. Nice touches include a night mode, a Ghost House, random sandstorms in the desert and a multiplayer co-op mode that can be shared by up to four players. If one player finishes it, everyone wins.

Super Mario Maker 2 + Nintendo Switch Online Bundle is launching in stores and digitally in Nintendo eShop on June 28 in addition to the stand-alone game.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: $60. Ages: 9-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, programming, coding, video game design. Entry date: 6/11/2019.

Luigi's Mansion 3

There's no shortage of silly, spooky puns in this year's edition of Luigi's Mansion (for up to eight players, on Nintendo Switch). This time Luigi is visiting a hotel, where he meets King Boo, Mario, Professor E. Gadd. The goal is to move through the maze of floors to capture ghosts using the Poltergust G-00. The ScareScraper mode is a race with up to eight players (either local or online). Note that this requires four Nintendo Switch systems with additional games that are sold separately. There are new ways to kill ghosts, such as with blasts of air or suction cups. Gooigi is an out of body mirror of Luigi that has different attributes. Coming 2019. Created for Nintendo by Next Level Games.

Details: Nintendo of America, Inc., www.nintendo.com. Price: $60. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: logic, spatial relations, timing. Entry date: 6/11/2019.

Legend of Zelda, The: Link's Awakening

This one player fantasy adventure for Nintendo Switch continues the Legend of Zelda series that started 25 years ago on the Game Boy, with a new retro style look and a DIY dungeon mode.

This time you (as Link) wash up on the island of Koholint -- a mysterious place with exotic residents. To escape, you collect magical instruments to wake the wind fish. You move through dungeons to fight Super Mario enemies like Goombas and Piranha Plants. The more you play, the more dungeon rooms you earn that you can use to make your own underground world. Compatible amiibo figures can be used to to earn more Chambers. Coming September 20, 2019.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: $60. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: logic, memory, spatial relations. Entry date: 6/11/2019.

Highlights Storybooks from Bamboo

This is a poorly designed, free Alexa skill that works on any Alex-enabled device. Getting started is easy. Just say "Alexa, enable Highlights Storybooks." Our initial tests found that the story selection process (aka onboarding) confusing because you have to be able to clearly state the complete title of the story in order to launch it. Because the title is heard in the context of a list read by the default Alexa voice, getting the story you want is akin to ordering a pasta dish in Italy. In addition, the pace of the comprehension questions (in level one) removes the joy of simply listening to a story.

Once you start the skill, you select a level and listen to a human narrator reading a short passage. After each narration, Alexa asks questions about the story, listens to the child's answer, evaluates the answer, and provides feedback. Parents have the option to review their children's progress and results via Bamboo Grove at www. bamboolearning.com/grove

Content includes 12 stories from the Highlights Storybook Collection series for Pre-K through 6th grade aged children). The skill bookmarks progress. This is the first ever Highlights content for a smart speaker content. Bamboo calls it a "voice-first" to build listening comprehension skills. The company was created by Ian Freed, who is a former Amazon executive. The skill is free, but it promotes other Bamboo apps. Note that if you run the skill on an a screen-enabled Alexa device such as the Fire TV products, you can see illustrations along with the text. See also Bamboo Books, Bamboo Math and Bamboo Music. Release date June 12, 2019.

Details: Bamboo Learning, www.bamboolearning.com. Price: $free. Ages: 5-12. Platform: Echo. Teaches/Purpose: reading comprehension, language, listening. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3 stars. Entry date: 6/11/2019. [buckleit]

Ease of Use	5	60	%
Educational	7		
Entertaining	6		
Design Features	6		
Good Value	N		

Battlebots Rivals

These small RC controlled robots are modeled after the larger "real" Battlebot robots. The objective is to knock the armor from the other robots. Each robot has a different weapon. Weapons include the Blacksmith's hammer and the spinning saw in Bite Force. The last bot standing wins. Each robot includes a small I/R Remote Control.

Batteries are included (AAA and AG13/LR44).

Details: Innovation First, Inc., www.hexbug.com. Price: $50. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: fine motor control, timing, spatial relations, logic, timing. Entry date: 6/19/2019.

Micro Titans RC Brawler Bots

Like rock 'em, sock 'em robots with spinning tops. If you get hit in the chest, your head pops off and you are out of the game.

You can't control the direction of your robot -- only the rate and direction of the spinning. The "Titans" are the Centurion, the Knight, the Viking and Samurai. The eyes light up, and the armor snaps on or off. The bowl shape of the arena keeps the tops in the middle.

Release date, Fall 2019.

Details: Innovation First, Inc., www.hexbug.com. Price: $50. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: timing, logic, fine motor. Entry date: 6/19/2019.
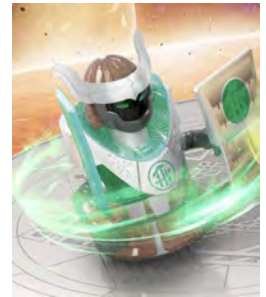
Gimble the Happy Tree Frog

Nice watercolor illustrations are found in a very basic, page-flipping design. This is an interactive math story about a tree frog who wants to have a pizza party. Doing so requires doing some math (like buying ingredients by dragging dollars by each ingredient, and dividing the pizza). If you touch the text, you can hear it narrated in English. Some pages have interactive features, with hidden rewards. Made with Unity.

Details: Happy Little Rain Cloud, https://www.happylittleraincloud.com/. Price: 2.99. Ages: 6-8. Platform: IOS. Teaches/Purpose: reading, math, fractions, money. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.1 stars. Entry date: 6/26/2019. []
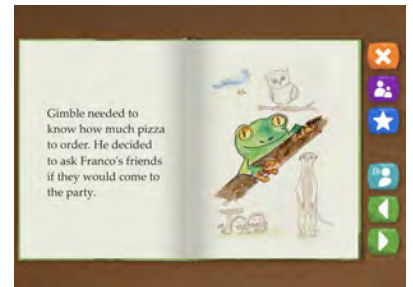
		62.5 %
Ease of Use	7	
Educational	8	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	5	
Good Value	5	

Stellar - The Gold Star Reward Chart App

Designed to let you put a "gold star" sticker chart on your you might keep on your refrigerator, only it's on your phone or tablet. The app is free to download and use with one chart at a time forever. You can unlock multiple charts going simultaneously to reward multiple behaviors/kids with a one time IAP (in app-purchase).

Details: Day One Design, www.dayonedesign.com. Price: free download, $4.99 (1-time) to unlock. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iOS. Teaches/Purpose: . Entry date: 6/26/2019.
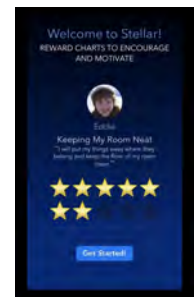
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 3 The Black Order

This is a fast moving 1 to 4 player brawler lets you play as a Marvel Super Hero. Your mission? To prevent galactic devastation by Thanos The Black Order. The game mechanic resembles many LEGO games, where the players can cooperate to defeat enemies, using their unique characteristics. There is also a paid add-on content option, called the Expansion Pass, with more characters and levels. The game can be played offline or online, with up to 4 players on a single screen, or using multiple systems. Different view options let you use a zoomed-in view when using the game as a single player. The bottom line? There are many types of games like this one. The fighting theme gives the game a TEEN rating although we did not see any objectionable content in the demo.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: $60. Ages: 1--up. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: timing, teamwork, logic, spatial relations. Entry date: 7/2/2019.

Pokémon Sword and Pokémon Shield

Designed for the Nintendo Switch system for one to four players, this 2019 Pokémon edition contains better looking Pokémon with more details -- leaving less to the imagination -- and a new open wild region to freely explore to hunt for Pokémon. This area is dynamic, with changing times and weather. This edition contains giant Pokémon, called Dynamax, with amplified powers. Launch date November 15, 2019. The game requires a Nintendo Switch Online membership

(sold separately) plus a Nintendo Account in order to play online. Created by Game Freak.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: $60. Ages: 7-up. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: logic, timing, collecting. Entry date: 7/2/2019.
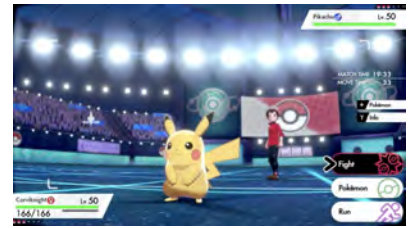
Novel Effect

As you read an illustrated ebook on the screen, associated parts of a soundscape happen. Because the sounds are triggered by your voice reading correct narration, it is fun to try to complete the page correctly to hear what audio surprises you might uncover. We noted in our testing that some of the sounds are also triggered by nonsense words. The idea is a good one, and there's a nice selection of sample books that make this app worth the download. Note that an Internet connect is required, and that some books appear without any illustrations.

The app is free, so what's the catch? Some of the books are trial versions with limited content, and others lead to a bookstore. In addition you are required to make an account, so your email is harvested.

Details: Novel Effect, Inc., www.novel-effect.com. Price: $free with teaser content and links to bookstores. Ages: 4-up. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: language, reading. Entry date: 7/2/2019.