

# October 2019

**Leapfrog's  
new handheld  
game system  
is worth a  
second look.**

**There's a  
goose on the  
loose.**

**We give Ring  
Fit Adventure a  
workout.**



On the cover: RockIt Twist, Untitled Goose Game and Ring Fit Adventure

## ***Children's Technology Review*** **October 2019**

Volume 27, No. 10 Issue 237

BlipBlox  
 Hot Wheels Infinite Loop  
 KidiBuzz G2  
 Luigi's Mansion 3  
 New Super Lucky's Tale  
 Nintendo Switch Lite

Pokémon Sword and  
 Pokémon Shield  
 PsyCard  
 Ring Fit Adventure  
 RockIt Twist, Rotatable  
 Learning Game System\*  
 Spaceteam  
 Super Kirby Clash  
 Untitled Goose Game



\* Denotes "Editor's Choice."

"Strength just comes in one brand – you stand up at sunrise, meet what they send you and keep your hair combed." Reynolds Price in the book *Kate Vaiden* (borrowed from the email footer of Alice Cahn).

Dear CTR Subscriber --

Where did the summer go? As you read this we're madly getting ready for the 19th annual Dust or Magic institute and our new reviewer, Chris Guest has been zipping to press events with his camera, collecting the news.

### LeapFrog's RockIt Twist

We always love it when designers successfully mix different play patterns. That's what you get when you unbox your new RockIt Twist, which combines tried and true screen based games with a set of innovative tactile controls that have busy board style switches and dials. And it's all in a road-trip, non-Internet, pass around the mini-van format. Nice work VTech/Leapfrog. See the full review in this issue.

### Does the "DS" in the Nintendo DS now mean "Dead System"?

Perhaps. Missing from recent press fall events was any mention of the beloved Nintendo DS. Why? The Switch is designed to work as a mobile system. Last month Nintendo released the a compact, cheaper Nintendo Lite Switch system dedicated only to handheld play with no TV docking support. This new edition trades out several features for a more affordable price point, and doesn't accommodate certain types of games. Another clue is that the latest version of Pokémon runs only on the Switch. Read the full review of the Switch Lite in this issue.

### The New Apple Arcade Shows Promise, But....

Apple still views children as a market segment. If they cared about children, they wouldn't feature apps like Hot Wheels Infinite Loop in their app store. Designed for profit, the app follows the tried-and-true formula that makes parents livid. Start with something children find irresistible, like Hot Wheels, and make the download free. Make the app easy to start -- at first. Then gradually ratchet up the need to buy things in order to keep playing. You can either earn your way through the game as you save the in-game currency and redeem the daily bonuses, or you can hurry things up by subscribing or using in-app purchases of premium currency. The subscription is \$11 a month or \$100/year. The game's currency, "Chromers" are rare to acquire normally, but can be purchased with real money, anywhere from \$2 to \$100. Herein lies our problem with Apple, Mattel and this app. While its gameplay is simple, flashy and satisfying enough, there is an interface built over the core loop of play which exposes children to constant resource requirements, fluctuating progress bars and 'special offers'. The compounding of this practice with a not unsubstantial subscription model for cosmetic and quality of life additions leaves a bad taste in the mouth, and in app stores in general.



## Children's Technology Review October 2019

Volume 27, No. 10 Issue 237

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# Feature Reviews and New Releases

OCTOBER, 2019

*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.*

## BlipBlox

This is a hyperactive self-contained MIDI controller designed young children (or adults). There are no traditional piano keys. Instead, you explore the toy-like knobs, buttons and levers to make sounds. There are plugs in back to connect to external instruments, if you have them.

From the moment you turn it on, you are presented with a complex pre-made collection of rhythms. It's as if it throws everything at you at once. Your job is to take away sounds and lights, one at a time.

A guide book explains each button, which is required because the functions are not immediately obvious. Some functions are harder to distinguish than others. We don't anticipate you'll naturally grasp concepts like Low Pass Filters, Envelope Generators and LFOs, for example.

If you're expecting a musical instrument, this mix of complexity and novel interface is likely to be a disappointment, especially given the steep price (about \$200).

It is possible to plug into a MIDI keyboard or external speakers with the 1/4 inch audio jack, but this process is also complicated. It's unfortunate that without a parent who is educated in digital audio and owns at least a simple synthesizer setup, these features are out of reach.

Ships with three AA batteries, one DC-USB power cord and a Quick Start Guide. The Blipblox is designed to play for at least 12 hours on three fresh AA batteries. It automatically powers off if untouched for 30 minutes.

Details: Playtime Engineering, [www.blipbox.com](http://www.blipbox.com). Price: \$190. Ages: 3-12. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: music, fine motor skills, experimentation, digital audio production, MIDI. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.3 stars. Entry date: 9/9/2019. [Chris Guest]



Ease of Use	6	66 %
Educational	7	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	5	





## Hot Wheels Infinite Loop

This is a potentially very expensive real-time online racing game with vehicle collection and level up features. You can either earn your way through the game as you save the in-game currency and redeem the daily bonuses, or you can hurry things up by subscribing or using in-app purchases of premium currency. The subscription is \$11 a month or \$100/year. This gives you access to special events, car skins and a larger item capacity. Content includes 8-player races set in the Hot Wheels universe featuring nice looking models of classic cars.

Children use touch controls to steer left and right, activate nitro boosts or drift to navigate tight turns in fast-paced one to two minute sessions with traditional racing rules alongside special modes such as team-based elimination mode Time Attackers, where two teams of four race to collect time extensions and outlast the opposing team. These races take place in Hot Wheels' vision of the year 2068; in a digitized, neon orange racetrack-tangled representation of New York City, with other environments planned down the road. The game provides a user name automatically from a set of pre-determined words and numbers when a child starts playing, which can be customized anytime from the settings menu. The iOS version uses Game Center to register for online play and can display Game Center user names instead. The nature of the default naming system prevents inappropriate monikers, but creative players still managed a few titles that turned our heads; CrunchyWedgie50, a real player name we encountered during play, offers a pretty viscerally unpleasant mental image. Depending on the child some may find this more of a humorous feature than a problem of course. Each race completed earns experience toward player level-ups, wins gain trophies which seem to dictate player ranking and what leagues they qualify for, and losses reduce them. Hot Gold makes up the basic currency, though its applicable uses seemed paltry in our time spent with the game. Chromers on the other hand, the game's 'premium' currency, are used to purchase the game's more appealing items, and in fact most things: loot boxes which can contain vehicles and parts, event tickets, they can even be converted into Hot Gold, though we're sure this isn't a worthwhile exchange in most cases. Chromers are rare to acquire normally, but can be purchased with real money, anywhere from \$2 for 40 Chromers to 2,500 Chromers for \$100. Herein lies our problem with Infinite Loop, while its gameplay is simple, flashy and satisfying enough, there is an interface built over the core loop of play which exposes children to constant resource requirements, fluctuating progress bars and 'special offers'. Want extra tickets to participate in event races? Watch two ads. Bored with the default car? Buy the starter pack for \$3 for a better one. We found it very easy to get somewhat lost in the various nested menus upon menus, and very little is expounded upon. There's a lot of information being vaguely presented here and it distracts from enjoying the racing portion of this app for what it is. With a profile level, trophy rankings, car stat upgrades, car parts, an expansive list of cars, several types of loot boxes, there's a lot to keep track of. Even accessing different game modes is not straightforward, the League menu offers only a single mode while the Challenge menu offers three modes, one of which has a vehicle type requirement and can't be accessed without a Truck class car. How to get a Truck? Find the right loot box? Which one has a truck? No clue. Everything, even the basic desire to pick what game mode you play seems destined to come back to the game's urging to buy in to its micro-transactions. In fact, most of the game's store front at the time of writing can only be earned using Chromers, and race-to-race earnings of the special currency drop off over time, leading to impatience, frustration and temptation to ask mom or dad for a few dollars to get a new vehicle skin immediately. Offers, status pop-ups, countdown timers and progress screens are easy enough to glaze over or ignore individually, but combine into an unavoidable haze of interface meant to make purchasing game features seem appealing, done at the expense of the base gameplay experience. Store items are tailored to be frustrating and out of reach for those who prefer to avoid or cannot afford micro-transactions, and the game's opening minutes even tantalize children by providing a souped-up test drive of a popular Hot Wheels car before replacing it with



Ease of Use	7	57.5 %
Educational	N	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	5	
Good Value	3	

a much more plain, unexciting vehicle, giving them a taste of the cool content they could have, if they can get the money for it. Considering what is otherwise a pretty clean user interface, even providing quick access to community forums and game news, the lack of clarity for in-game details themselves is a disappointment. We can't help but show some bias against the clear loot box game philosophy for sale here. Children intent on unboxing their favorite Hot Wheels car or truck could spend exorbitant amounts of money in pursuit of that one special item, not just on the boxes themselves, but on three hour wait times expressly added for another outlet to get an impatient child to spend Chromers for instant gratification. The option to wait out the timer is certainly there but we consider the scenario that to some, waiting isn't very fun. The game is hardly subtle about its stance on this either, as tutorial character Vert Wheeler explains, "Waiting... It's the opposite of racing, amiright? You can skip any wait time with Chromers." the game itself suggests players make use of this wasteful feature, so what will you spend? Your money, or your time? The compounding of this practice with a not unsubstantial subscription model for cosmetic and quality of life additions leaves a bad taste in the mouth.



## KidiBuzz G2

Designed to satisfy a child who wants a phone of their own, this \$100 Android based touch-screen tablet comes with a dozen built-in apps, a camera, utilities like a calculator and access to a Vtech app store. Of special interest is the KidiConnect service, a built in utility that costs \$.50 to start using that is designed to allow parent-approved contacts to send and receive messages, photos and voice recordings to and from the device via WiFi. Music and videos can be imported via USB as well.

You start by making a Vtech Learning Lodge account, which is not optional if you want access to the additional content.

Features include a rotatable low res camera and microphone, and a gyroscope so you can tilt to move a marble through a maze. A micro SD card slot lets you store music, photos or videos.

The design feels clunky, and the touch screen can be unresponsive. You may find yourself tapping several times on an icon. The narration is chatty, and the E-Books app makes it hard to read. The Magic Beanstalk game contains a micro transaction game mechanic with timers, premium currencies and so on. While no actual micro transactions are in the game, it's strange to see these features include in a children's product.

While the KidiBuzz aims to provide a safe alternative to letting children loose with unsupervised smart device content, it sits in a limbo of being overwhelming to use, offering features that function only under specific conditions requiring setup by an adult.

Details: Vtech Electronics North America, [www.vtechkids.com](http://www.vtechkids.com). Price: \$100, 50 cents device verification via PayPal, Offers \$6 Monthly LeapFrog Academy Subscription. Ages: 4-9. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: communication, multimedia interaction, creativity, augmented reality. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 2.8 stars. Entry date: 9/3/2019. [Chris Guest]



Ease of Use	6	56 %
Educational	6	
Entertaining	6	
Design Features	5	
Good Value	5	

## Luigi's Mansion 3

UPDATED 9/28/19 Mario's younger brother is featured in the third entry of this ghost-capturing series with a release date of Halloween 2019.

In the story, a luxury hotel is haunted. Luigi must venture through the themed floors of the Last Resort to find his captured friends. We liked the story elements, with such things as a Medieval restaurant, an undead jousting match and an overgrown arboretum with hungry flowers. To fight bad guys you use a ghost vacuum that can fire suction shots to pull heavy objects, or disarm ghosts. You can play as either Gooigi or Luigi, switching between when playing alone, or sharing controls with another player in co-op mode. A timed ScareScraper mode works with eight players. Published by Nintendo, developed by Next Level Games.

Details: Next Level Games, <http://www.nextlevelgames.com/>. Price: \$60. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: logic, spatial relations, timing, puzzle-solving, co-operation,. Entry date: 6/11/2019.



## New Super Lucky's Tale

Super Lucky's Tale, originally released for Xbox and Windows, is now available for the Nintendo Switch.

As with most platformers you explore to reach treasures and complete goals. Lucky's skill set includes digging through the earth with the swiftness of swimming through water, and the ability to move through obstacle courses to surprise enemies before giving them a bonk on the head.

You encounter a variety of gameplay styles, like 2D side-scrolling challenges, puzzle-solving sections and several battles, uncovering secrets and unlocking rewards such as special costumes as they go. Several additions and improvements have been made for this new release, with refined controls, graphical and audio updates, and new gameplay content exclusive to this version of the game.

Details: Playful Studios, <https://playfulstudios.com/>. Price: \$40. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch, Xbox One, Windows. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relationships, hand-eye coordination, platforming, puzzle-solving. Entry date: 9/28/2019.





## Nintendo Switch Lite

A compact, cheaper (by \$100) Nintendo Switch system dedicated only to handheld play with no TV docking support and rechargeable batteries, this new edition trades out several features for a more affordable price point, and doesn't accommodate certain types of games as well as its older sibling.

Games with small text or many details will be made more difficult to play given no option for switching to the big screen. Motion control operation and multiplayer are also at a loss. External controllers can still be connected, but bring their own design kerfuffles. Does your friend have to lean over your shoulder to play co-op with you? Having seemingly small features like the built-in kickstand removed makes you realize their usefulness.

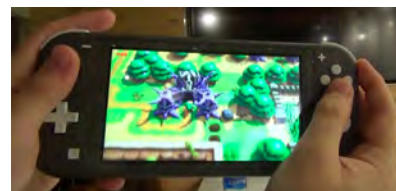
Nintendo will label games that are supported for handheld mode, but some existing titles have motion control features like Super Mario Odyssey' and Pokémon Let's Go's Pokéball (where you throw). These will be less intuitive on the Lite, while still being marked as handheld-friendly. It will also be impossible to replace a defective Joy-Con controller.

Also be careful regarding your Nintendo account. We noted this comment on Amazon.com "I have two young kids, and all 3 of us have our own profiles which are linked under my main account via Nintendo ID. The problem is is that only the main account holder (me) can play the purchased games on both devices. So the Switch Lite does not work for either of my kids, only my main account. Yes, this can be switched by changing which Switch device is the "primary" switch, but the fact still remains that under NO conditions can my kids play both switch consoles at the same time, even if it is two separate games. If you have cartridges instead of digital downloads, you will not have this problem."

Switch Lite comes in three colors (yellow, turquoise and gray) and uses a plus-shaped D-Pad in favor of the original's separated four face buttons on the left Joy-Con. Rechargeable batteries are built in, and are advertised to last four to seven hours depending on system brightness and the intensity of the game being played. Release date September 20, 2019.

Read more at <http://bitly.com/32npEEv>

Details: Nintendo of America, [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com). Price: \$200. Ages: 5-up.  
Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: A handheld game console. Entry date: 7/10/2019.



## Pokémon Sword and Pokémon Shield

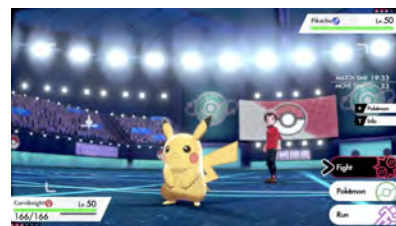
UPDATED 9/28/19 Pokémon returns with its first mainline entry for the Nintendo Switch (departing from the Nintendo DS). This time you explore the UK-inspired Galar region, with its own variations on familiar faces, like a chimney-topped Weezing or the newly revealed, knightly Sirfetch'd.

The spectacle of Pokémon battles is bigger than before, as Sword and Shield sets its gym leader battles in sports stadiums, and Dynamax and Gigantamax forms can be activated under special circumstances to boost your Pokémon and their abilities to titanic proportions.

New additions include open-world areas to explore and online raid battles where you can fight Pokémon in a team of up to four. Otherwise, expect the usual: Catch and trade Pokémon, build a team of buddies and quest to become the best Pokémon trainer.

Launch date November 15, 2019, developed by Game Freak. Online features require a Nintendo Switch Online membership (\$20 yearly subscription).

Details: Game Freak, Inc., <http://www.gamefreak.co.jp/>. Price: \$60. Ages: 7-up.  
Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: logic, strategy, exploration, collecting.  
Entry date: 7/2/2019.





## PsyCard

Remember the classic game Minesweeper? This easy to learn, difficult to master competitive card game can be played alone or with a friend.

In story mode you pick one of four characters and proceed to play through several PsyCard tournaments large and small to place their rank among the best competitors. The game's pacing is relaxed, and win or lose, the story mode will progress uninterrupted, meant to be a casual, comfortable tour through the enjoyable psychic sport.

Minesweeper veterans will find the basic mechanics to be familiar, except with matches broken into quick, two-player rounds, first to the score limit wins. The game's tutorial is a bit sparse, so newcomers will likely need some time to figure things out. Each card you flip reveals information about its surrounding cards. Plus signs indicate apple cards, collect three of the five scattered around the board and you win the round. A skull will end the round in a loss for whoever flipped it, meaning the opponent gains vital points towards their victory. Lastly, stars provide extra points if you win the round, but more importantly they charge your character's star meter, which allows the use of unique psychic abilities such as revealing unknown cards to reduce risky plays, or to control an opponent's next move.

New characters encountered in the story mode are unlocked in multiplayer mode, which provides custom rulesets and game variants to tailor the game experience how you like, such as turning off star abilities if you find them unfair. A mode simply titled Friend's Quest stars the cyborg heroine Friend in her own dungeon crawler, providing a bonus retro adventure to explore and practice your card-flipping prowess.

Even for those who couldn't wrap their head around the numeric nightmare of a tough Minesweeper game, PsyCard may be a good contemporary middle ground to enjoy its classic risk/reward strategy.

Details: Ludosity AB, <http://ludosity.com/games/>. Price: \$1. Ages: 9+. Platform: iPhone, Android, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: strategy, luck, risk/reward, reading, puzzle-solving, minesweeper,. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 9/23/2019. [Chris Guest]



Ease of Use	7	82 %
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	10	

## Ring Fit Adventure

Coming to the Nintendo Switch October 18th, this single-player fitness utility meets role-playing game is reminiscent of 2008's Wii Fit. It includes a peripheral fitness ring (the Ring-Con) as well as a leg strap to sense leg motions.

As you jog in place, you move through a fantasy world with enemies such as a yoga mat-shaped manta or a barbell-clawed crab. You must perform real-life exercises to make it through. You do get a workout via abdominal press & twists and a rowing simulator. In the game's turn-based battles, you can select a loadout of actions and stances to select from. Maximized damage, healing and otherwise advantageous effects are rewarded for performing actions with good timing and proper form. Features include a handful of extra minigames and customizable profiles for specialized training sessions of all skill levels.

Details: Nintendo of America, Inc., [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com). Price: \$80 (includes game, Ring-Con & Leg Strap). Ages: 6-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: physical education, movement, coordination, gross motor skills, timing, exercise. Entry date: 9/25/2019.





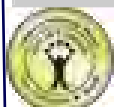


## RockIt Twist, Rotatable Learning Game System

This is a durable, sandwich sized, rotatable standalone game system. Content includes 12 pre-loaded games which provide playful exposure to early math, reading and logic skills. RockIt is ready to go right out of the box -- you don't even need AA batteries -- a first for this category of devices. We were pleased to see the built-in rechargeable batteries, but be sure to retrieve the packaged USB cable as you will need it to charge the batteries, as well as to install additional content if you choose to purchase the \$8 add-on game packs. Battery life is solid -- easily supporting our four hours of testing (or a long car ride) with no low battery warning. If more than one child wants to use the device, there are two available profiles to save game progress and custom art/ music, with a third guest profile available for temporary play sessions with friends. The face of the device consists of eight tactile controls. There are clicking buttons, a swaying switch, swiping slider and spinning wheels surrounding the screen, enough to make a fidget cube blush. This isn't only a fidget toy; the system makes use of every input method with its included set of games, often requiring the rotation of the RockIt for ease of access to controls -- thus the 'Twist' namesake. The device comes in two colors (green or purple), and there is a protective bumper that seems durable.

The 12 included games succeed in presenting a blend of things to do -- many have three levels and rewards to earn, keeping things interesting over time. One favorite is "Bunny Bust Out" (found in the Playground Station) which tasks the player with a quick succession of micro-games, each no longer than 10 seconds, and uses many of the controls over a single session, an effective way to see what the RockIt can do. One of the main attractions of the RockIt Twist is the Pet Station. Greeting children with three colorful eggs, the mode begins with a quick hatching minigame to meet the new pet then opening to a variety of activities. These pets love attention and can be groomed, tickled and pat using different controls. After spending some time with it, a pet will evolve into an older form, rewarding good care. The Practice Station provides a few simple games and several flash cards with simple study topics, offering little interaction but a decent range of basic learning opportunities. The Maker Station consists of a pixel art editor and a DJ mode, each of which allow for saving a handful of art and audio files. There is a Sneak Peek Station whose sole purpose is to play an advertisement video for the aforementioned game packs, showcasing their added games and features. While in-app and product ads are a touchy subject, we found the RockIt handled this in a tasteful manner which avoids ever being intrusive or manipulative. The system never teases the game packs as 'locked' features that you are missing and need to buy, only showing their game categories once you've purchased and installed them. The Sneak Peek is exactly what it says it is, a preview of other attractions for the device. One thing our testers wish the RockIt would offer is a touch screen. While the screen space is small, some interface interactions we felt tripped up, specifically the directional pad is exclusive for opting 'yes' or 'no' when quitting a game, but allowing use of any applicable button with left/ right input (most of them in fact) would be better, and simply tapping the desired option on-screen would be best, making it faster and easier for when the device is twisted in an awkward direction to reach for the directional pad. There are six additional game packs at the time of writing to be purchased separately either for \$8 individually or in selected 2-packs for \$15. Each game pack includes a small pet charm in a decorated egg container, but the real content of these packs comes from redeemable code cards which require a LeapFrog Parent account and some setup to install onto the RockIt Twist system using LeapFrog Connect. Once installed, these game packs add a new pet egg to hatch and raise, as well as a whole new Station to the main menu. Penelope Penguin: Pet Detective, one of the game packs we received, has an expansive campaign's worth of investigative adventures. Between new pets and sizable gameplay additions, there are enough features in these packs to add a worthwhile expansion to your child's RockIt Twist experience. Know that a parent will need to commit several minutes to redeem and install a game pack onto the handheld with the appropriate software and account access. Thankfully this is the most challenging part of using the RockIt Twist, and the



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

system itself requires no other setup, internet connection or other hubbub. 4GB of storage space come with the device, which is more than you will need. This space is used to install game pack data and to import your own MP3s from a computer to play from the system's Music category, which comes preloaded with a few of its own songs but hosts your own just as well. So far as we know, this space cannot be used for anything else. However, for long car trips it can serve as a great MP3 player, sporting a headphone jack (headphones sold separately) and volume controls, so no worries about high volume or constant sound effects becoming grating. One knock against this otherwise handy feature: There is no good way to navigate the song library other than scrolling one song at a time. With the extra storage space you could add hundreds of songs easily, but the lack of a search function renders this impractical. Adding just your child's favorite album or playlist to scroll through is the sweet spot here, enough to scroll through and enjoy, but not too much that you'll never find that one song you want to hear. Sound quality is fairly good, so if your child likes to rock out, the RockIt Twist is happy to accommodate whatever they listen to. While the twisting feature provides great design opportunities, chances are it will confuse and frustrate children over time, as it will often require twisting the orientation of the device for mini-games without prior warning until the new game screen loads in. These changes make spatial sense in context, but there's a moment of delay between seeing it and correcting the rotation, sometimes many times in a row. These moments would benefit from a 'Twist' indication during loading times, showing the right direction to hold the device as a game loads so there are less cases of stumbling onto a disorienting sideways or even upside-down screen. There were also some small instances during our testing of unresponsive controls, in particular once during the Nom-Nom game when changing directions using the directional pad, and on several occasions we had difficulty getting the orange swipe pad to respond for actions that required a degree of timing. On the other hand, even with the system's bevy of buttons, it does a fantastic job clueing in children when to use what. Each control is equipped with colored lights which help guide them on what controls work for the current game. Alongside such helpful visual guides are female and male announcers who provide explanation for every menu screen and game objective, well-intentioned but occasionally to a point of dissonance. Many of these messages can thankfully be skipped or interrupted, so children have some control if they lose patience with these encouraging chatterboxes. The RockIt Twist is a big step forward for this type of handheld, its strong features certainly outweighed our critiques and we hope to see LeapFrog continue innovating their products further in this direction.



## Spaceteam

Help! Your ship is about to blow up! This fast-paced co-op game for two to eight players challenges you to save the day by following directions and manipulating controls on your touch screen. There's plenty of shouting as you relay instructions to your crew members, making this an excellent social experience.

This is a local multiplayer only game -- meaning that you can play over either Wi-Fi or Bluetooth. We had a few glitches when we mixed Android and iOS devices in the same game, but it is possible and the FAQ section helps troubleshoot.

There is an optional \$5 in-app purchase (not required to play the core game) which unlocks more levels and features. The publisher also has a Patreon page, so you are asked for support.

Note that if you want to learn or are teaching English or French, there are versions of this app with pronunciation tools.

Location and camera permissions are used in the game. The publisher claims that no personal information is stored or transmitted. We enjoyed the "FailCam" mode which nicely captures the chaos of space travel failure.

The bottom line: This game will appeal to all ages, and could be a good way for a young child to play with a Grandparent.

Created by Henry Smith, a former Bioware programmer turned independent developer.

Details: Henry Smith Inc., <https://spaceteam.ca/>. Price: Free with IAP up to \$5. Ages: 9+. Platform: iPhone, iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: inter-personal relations, co-operation, communication, fine motor control,. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 8/28/2019. [Chris Guest]



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

## Super Kirby Clash

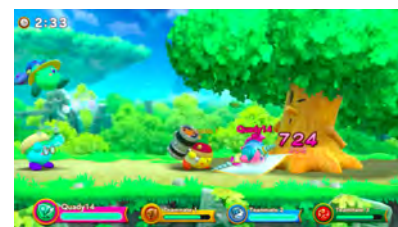
Kirby -- Nintendo's tiny pink superhero -- makes his next debut on the Nintendo Switch. First introduced in 1993, this modern Kirby is an updated version of Team Kirby Clash Deluxe (2017 for the 3DS). The game is "Free-to-Start" meaning you can jump in and start playing for no charge, but inevitably will find progress difficult without paying as much as \$40 for Gem Apples. Whether you do or not, there's at least a few hours of great fun to be had. This is multiplayer game, so you can gang up on the various bosses with up to three friends locally or over the internet as long as you have a Nintendo Switch Online subscription.

You get to choose among four roles: Blade Hero, Hammer Lord, Doctor Healmore or Beam Mage. Each has unique equipment and moves which complement and support one another in battle.

Super Kirby Clash is generous with its rewards at first, providing you with enough Gem Apples to buy new items, stickers and quests with regularity. Within a few hours though, you run into price hikes and a dire shortage of Gem Apples. This is too bad because the core Kirby gameplay is very fun, especially with friends. But don't expect to get to the end without paying real money.

We noticed a few bouts of slowdown and disconnection during online play available in the game's Party Quest mode, but most of the time sessions ran smoothly. Super Kirby Clash does not skimp out on typical Nintendo polish, and Kirby fans may find the game enjoyable in short bursts, but under the surface it's an unpleasant indicator that even Nintendo's Kirby is not exempt from manipulative design practices. Developed by HAL Laboratory & Published by Nintendo.

Details: Nintendo of America, Inc., [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com). Price: Free-to-Start, In-Game Purchases up to \$40. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: co-operation, twitch reflexes, team strategy, role management,. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.4 stars. Entry date: 9/13/2019. [Chris Guest]



Ease of Use	7	70 %
Educational	N	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	6	
Good Value	7	



## Untitled Goose Game

Control a mischievous goose as you explore a village full of things that invite trouble. If there was a modern day Peter Rabbit, this might be it. You conduct pranks, steal hats, honk and surprise people, and try to ruin people's day in a playful way. This is a one player game, but it could be fun to play with a parent.

Details: House House, <https://househou.se/>. Price: \$20. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch, Steam, Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: logic . Entry date: 9/30/2019.

