Children's TECHNOLOGY REVIEW EXCHANGE

Spring/Summer, 2020

BOLOGNA CHILDREN'S ONLINESPECIALEDITION BOOK FAIR

A tribute to the 2020 Bologna Children's Book Fair

On the cover: The Wanderer: Frankenstein's Creature, Winner of the 2020 BolognaRagazzi Digital Award.

CHILDREN'S TECHNOLOGY REVIEW EDITOR'S CHOICE 20 20 FOR EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN

* Denotes "Editor's Choice."

Warren Buckleitner

Children's Technology Review

"Like a summer thunderstorm, release from COVID-19 confinement may wash away heat from the "screen time" argument and renew variety and balance in kids' lives." David Kleeman, Dubit, in the Cooney Center blog, at https://bitly.com/3avGQKQ

Welcome to the Spring/Summer issue of CTR. I'm writing this remotely, 778 miles away from my home and college, happily stuck on an extended spring break with my family in Georgia while the world settles down. For me things could be much worse. Besides being together with 18 month Grandson, I'm able to write, review and teach my classes I happened to have packed my laptop and tablets. I've been amazed at my ability to teach remotely using Zoom, and my iPads have been in constant use by my 18 month old Grandson. These devices are no longer options. They're my link to the outside world; both for work and for fun -- serving up movies and the textbooks I left behind at thome. I can make a living as an educator, reviewer and writer. But not everyone is so lucky. As I point out in my essay for the Cooney Center, (below) the Coronavirus Pandemic shines a bright light on the digital divide.

The Cooney Center asks: What changes are in store for children as a result of the Coronavirus?

That was the question asked of a group of early childhood media experts at https://bitly.com/3avGQKQ. Some highlights: App designer **Caroline Hu Flexer** from Khan Academy Kids said "great design innovations often occur within significant constraints." We'll look forward to seeing some of the innovations from this situation. **David Kleeman** of Dubit said "Like a summer thunderstorm, release from COVID-19 confinement may wash away heat from the "screen time" argument and renew variety and balance in kids' lives." We're living in a time when "screen time" has moved from nuisance to a necessity. **Michael Rich** from the Harvard Medical School wrote that "Coronavirus is opportunistic and indiscriminate, with no nationality, politics, allies, or enemies. We must defend, not with the familiar 'us against them' mentality, but by protecting each other to protect ourselves: 'us with us.'" Now is a time for unity. Finally, **Mimi Ito** of the University of California wrote "People of all ages crave social connection, but teens are often uniquely separated from those whom they care deeply about. COVID-19 has given more people of all ages a window into this experience." And I wrote "This connectivity is a post-pandemic basic need, alongside such things as food, shelter, and safety, per Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs."

Publisher's Note: Please note our new quarterly format.
 Midwinter (KAPi Winners, CES roundup, March 1)
 Spring/Summer (BolognaRagazzi Winners, May 1)
 Early Fall (Back to School, September 1)
 Late Fall (Dust or Magic News, November 1)
Our weekly reports will continue to be delivered to subscribers by email. Contact us with questions (info@childrenstech.com).

Dust or Magic

Save the Date!

Oct. 9-11, 2020 • The Methods of Fred Rogers at Asilomar with Margy Whitmer, Producer, Mr. Rogers Neighborhood www.dustormagic.com/fred

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Can a $1500 robot teach social skills? "Moxie" wants a chance

Do you live with a moody kid? Coming this fall... an expensive smart speaker-driven robot with an animated face, voice recognition and app designed to deliver the STAR Framework (for autism spectrum disorders). According to CTR contributor Scott Traylor, extremely expensive robots for this purpose are nothing new. Learn more at https://arxiv.org/pdf/2004.12962.pdf or read the preview in this issue.

The 2020 Bologna Children's Book Fair will be online only

"In these days we are dealing with a genuine emergency that involves not only our country but, unfortunately, has an international dimension," according to Antonio Bruzzone, General Manager of BolognaFiere, as he called for a cancellation of the 2020 Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF). My own spring migration to central Italy started in 1997, when CTR was hired to design a children's software award program. That award has changed over the years, but the core values are the same: a face-to-face meeting of independent jurors and a common quest for quality and innovation. While I won't be attending the fair this year, I will be discussing the awards virtually via Zoom. It won't be the same without our Proscecco toast, but at least we'll keep the conversation going. Here's how you can participate:

1. Watch the juror's video, at https://youtu.be/2O7Icp7OsNE
2. Attend the Dust or Magic Bologna virtual masterclass at 10:30 AM EST on May 6. Register at bitly.com/dustormagic2020bologna

Stuck at home? Take a Virtual Field Trip

I've been teaching a virtual field trip class at TCNJ this semester using a Macbook Pro running a Zoom Pro account, a $400 Oculus Quest, an iPad Pro connected to the Macbook via USB. We use Google Maps with Street View to start the trip, and then explore the area using YouTube and local images. I've discovered that it's possible to screencast the view from the Oculus Quest https://www.oculus.com/experiences/quest/ so I can "take" my students to places I've visited such as Ann Frank's home in Amsterdam. By combining VR with the TouchPress app "The Pyramids" I was able to give my class a first person narrated tour of the Great Pyramid of Giza. Other tours have included Facebook's headquarters and guest lecture tours by invited guides from Redmond Washington and small New York studio apartment. Here are some links we've used:

Robots for Social Emotional use (Arranged by price)

Social Emotional Robots

Leka	Moxie	Kaspar	Kiwi	Jett	QTrobot	NAO
Leka $390	Embodied $1,500 & $60/month	U of Hertfortshire $1,675	USC $4,500	RoboKind $5,000	LuxAI $7,600	SoftBank Robotics $15,,000 - $22,300

- Kutaku's 10 places to visit in Japan https://bitly.com/34Twxil
- The Strong Museum of Play in Manhattan NY https://www.museumofplay.org/
- ISS Space Station https://youtu.be/06-Xm3_Ze1o
- 24 Hours in Singapore https://youtu.be/M8auD-4bGk0
- 52 Places to Go Virtually from the New York Times https://nyti.ms/2Vr7crJ

Hey! Where are Google's "Teacher Approved" apps?

I was excited to learn that the Google Play team was going to start listing "Teacher Approved" apps. Here's the announcement by Mindy Brooks, a UX Director at Google Play --> https://bitly.com/2SjsYga. Sadly none were listed as of April 21, 2020. We also looked to see if any apps were labeled, or if the people making editorial decisions were, in fact teachers. All we could find was a link to a blog post published two years ago. The concept is a good one in theory, but Google gets a failing grade so far.

80 Federally Funded Learning Games to Download, Free

Our friend Edward Metz at the US Department of Education (Edward.Metz@ed.gov) has curated a list of federally funded learning games on display form the recent ED Games Expo. All of the entries are free due to the COVID crisis until the end of the school year, and all of the projects have been government funded with support from the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Programs at ED/IES and other agencies, as well as through programs at IES and across government. The developers have made these easy to access. In addition, Ed has created a series of virtual conferences on early learning (Tuesday, May 5); social studies (Thursday, May 7) and Science (Friday May 21).

Read the news --> https://bitly.com/3eOd878 or skim the list of games --> https://bitly.com/2RYpUWS.

Other CTREX news of interest

- Teaching college classes in the age of the coronavirus (a WOSU Radio Interview) at https://youtu.be/lvkDw4y-4dI
- CTREX app reviews in the New York Times.Read Apps for Quarantined Families at https://nyti.ms/3auNKj

A Tribute to the Bologna Children's Book Fair

A re you going to Bologna? It's a small question that has meant big things for the careers of authors (ask JK Rowling), illustrators, digital designers and at least one software reviewer (me).

Over the past 57 years, the Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF) has become the epicenter for innovation in children's publishing. Every spring, huge crowds of authors, illustrators, agents and more recently app designers from all over the world flock to Bologna to enjoy the intoxicating mix of food, wine and people; all set in a medieval frame that has survived repeated invasions, plagues, bombings and has been the home to emperors and Popes. Many important foods have been invented in Bologna, and it is home to the world's oldest still functioning university (The University of Bologna, founded 1088. Really).

The BolognaRagazzi Digital Award

I started my personal migration to Bologna, Italy in 1997 when I was hired to help the fair organizers design an award program for a new category of digital media products. From 1997 to 2002, the Bologna New Media Prize jurors met face-to-face in Bologna to install CD-ROMs and test the products and debate. After giving the awards, we'd organize talks in the fair's Digital Café where the conversations would extend for hours over multiple courses of wine, pasta and gelate in central Bologna. In 2012, the prize was modernized and downsized, to match the evolving web-based medium. Today the jurors download hundreds of promo codes on their tablets before meeting for the traditional face-to-face meeting in Bologna. Because the Bolognafaire staff covers the expenses and supplies the dinners, it has always been easy to recruit world class jurors. Here are some other things you may not know about this award.

> ### The 2020 Award at a Glance
>
> • 94 entries from 29 countries
> • One winner, three special mentions and ten shortlist selections
> • Five jurors from Italy, UK, Spain and the USA

- It is free to enter, open to any publisher of interactive media products for children.
- The jurors share what they learn each year.
- The winners enjoy a rare form of international exposure at an extravagant prize ceremony in the ancient center city that comprises Bologna.
- The judging process informs CTR's editorial decisions.
- This is a juried award. A rotating jury of experts in digital media and illustration meet in person to debate and choose the winner.

Last year, the fair attracted 1200 exhibitors coming from 66 countries and 5000 international professional trade representatives. See the CTREX listing of past award winners, at https://reviews.childrenstech.com/ctr/awards.php

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About the Bologna Children's Book Fair

Since 1963, The Bologna Children's Book Fair has attracted huge crowds (up to 28,000) of children's publishers to Bologna, Italy. 2020 marks the first year that the fair has been canceled.

This rich history has made Bologna the place where all forms of children's publishing. Rights are sold or purchased, both for translations and for derived products like movies, films or apps.

It is also the event where a number of major juried awards are given. Besides the BolognaRagazzi Digital Award, prizes are given for the biannual Hans Christian Andersen Awards and the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.

Because a children's book is comprised of much more than a story, the BCBF is also home to the Illustrators Exhibition, which presents the work of 3,000 illustrators from 70 countries.

In 1997, the BCBF entered into a working relationship with *Children's Technology Review* (USA) to organize a juried digital prize. The Bologna New Media Prize ran from 1998 to 2005. It was replaced by the BolognaRagazzi Digital Award in 2012.

This year's fair will be digital. As a result, CTR has helped the fair create on online digital conference using Zoom. Besides this event, there are other online events; and many are free of charge. You can see the entire schedule of virtual events in this Publisher's Weekly article by Ed Nawotka, at https://bitly.com/3bGjF1G. We also encourage you to watch the 2020 BolognaRagazzi Digital Award juror's commentary video, at https://youtu.be/2O7Icp7OsNE before attending the free Dust or Magic Bologna virtual masterclass at 10:30 AM EST on May 6. Register at bitly.com/dustormagic2020bologna The next fair in Bologna is scheduled for 12 to 15 April 2021.

Above: One of the dinners, where informal conversation leads to an exchange of ideas.
Below: One of the past Dust or Magic Masterclasses, featuring best digital practices and guest speakers.

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.

Animal Crossing New Horizons

You've landed on your personal deserted island. You set up your tent and start exploring where you meet and trade with animal residents who are crafting things you need. This is an open world exploration experience with connectivity features that cost extra. You can move up from your tent to your own home, and help to make the island just the way you want it to be. You can also invite others to join the game. Features include continually updated content with seasonal items, including a spring "Bunny Day." If you purchase the Switch online membership you can have access to NookLink which lets you scan a Custom Design QR Code pattern from previous Animal Crossing games (New Leaf or Happy Home Designer) to import content.

You can also communicate with friends who own the game with the Nintendo Switch Online smartphone app that uses your smartphone for keyboard for voice chat. The game is compatible with the Switch Lite. Note that only one island can exist per Nintendo Switch system. Up to eight players can live on the same island within one game. With one Nintendo Switch system and one game, up to four players can play on the same island at the same time. With additional systems and games, up to eight Nintendo Account holders can play on the same island at the same time via local wireless or online play. Learn more at https://www.animal-crossing.com/new-horizons.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: $60. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Nintendo Switch. Teaches/Purpose: Economics, balancing a budget, managing resources, maps, interpersonal problem solving, sharing resources, working cooperatively, reading, following directions, deductive reasoning, spatial reasoning, problem solving. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 3/23/2020. []
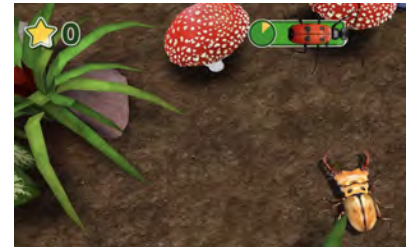
Ease of Use	9
Educational	9
Entertaining	10
Design Features	10
Good Value	9

94 %

Bugs and Beyond

It's been a long time since we reviewed a new app from Scott Vann from Little Bit Studio. Despite the unglamorous but functional main menu, the 18 activities succeed in delivering both variety and depth making this an excellent all purpose app for Pre-K and early elementary age children. You can hunt for a matching bug in a jungle, program a robot to navigate through a maze, or feed realistic looking kitten. As with previous "bugs" apps, the illustrations are striking, and fact that an amazing looking bug might crawl onto the screen at any time helps to keep things interesting. This is an ethical app, with no IAP or data collection issues.

Details: Little Bit Studio, LLC, www.littlebitstudio.com. Price: $1.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: logic, early reading, early math, coding, classification, attributes. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 3/18/2020. [buckleit]

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

94 %

Code the Robot Save the Cat

A collection of puzzles that use direction commands. The objective is simple -- get a robot through a maze to rescue a cat. How? Sliding arrow key commands to a command line, and pressing "go." The game starts easy and progress is saved for multiple players. You start with simple up/down/left and right directions, and move up to loops, functions and conditions.

Each level is unlocked as the relationship between the cat and the robot grows. Mistakes are illustrated, and you get plenty of time to try again. There are five islands, each with about 20 levels that get harder. It is also possible to create your own challenges. This is a commercial free app with no tricks.

Details: Learny Land, http://learnyland.com/. Price: $3.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: math, logic, coding, directions, commands, problem solving. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 3/3/2020. []

Ease of Use	9
Educational	9
Entertaining	9
Design Features	9
Good Value	9

90 %

Doodlematic

Turn simple sketches or items into game sprites, with this easy to use, well designed game creation system.

After you download the app, you find some markers and paper and start literally drawing and coloring your game elements. You can also import photos of objects (like a golf ball or a cup) to serve as your sprites. The actual game mechanics are limited. It's easy to make a side-scrolling game with left/right/up/down and jump controls. If you're looking for a Scratch replacement this isn't your app. But you can combine the game controls and visual elements in interesting ways. If you purchase the game for $30 you can share your games with others and unlock more content. The app is free to download with in-app purchases and an Internet connection is required to play.

Details: Tink Digital Inc., www.tinkdigital.com. Price: $free, $29.99. Ages: 7-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, programming. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 3/10/2020. []

Ease of Use	9
Educational	9
Entertaining	
Design Features	
Good Value	

90 %

Duolingo ABC

Here's a series of well designed, responsive, multi-sensory early phonics activities that introduce each letter at a time through sorting, tracing, matching and speech recognition. Content includes 300 bite-sized lessons that cover the alphabet, phonics and sight words. There are no ads or in-app purchases. Highly recommended.

Details: Duolingo, www.duolingo.com. Price: $free. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: early reading, language, phonics, fine motor, tracing, letters. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 3/26/2020. []

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

92 %

Eduka's World - English for Kids

A subscription English curriculum designed for non-English speakers. After you set up your profile, you are shown a short video introducing three characters -- Ed, U and Ka, who introduce phonics sounds through repetitive activities in order to defeat the mean fox. Content includes games, songs and simple games. Features include the ability to set time limits and to track your child's progress. The app is really free, despite the description on App Store still showing IAPs - no features of the app require a premium subscription (you can't even buy one within the app) right now, all paywalls are disabled for the next few months.

Details: Primed Kids GmbH, https://edukasworld.com. Price: $5/month. Ages: 3 -10. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: language, reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.7 stars. Entry date: 4/21/2020. []

Ease of Use	7	74 %
Educational	8	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	6	
Good Value	8	

Fiete World

April 2020: Fiete World Mexico has been released. https://youtu.be/cdf3mXQwzrQ. This adds to the existing content in Fiete World, for subscribers.

This is a silky smooth "dollhouse" style app that uses a globe navigation scheme, making it easy to jump between five themed play worlds. On one large island, you can cook, garden or care for animals in three different homes. Or you can hop onto one of four vehicles (pirate ship, fishing boat, tractor or helicopter) to visit a pirate's island or lighthouse, for dress up play or beach-themed adventures. The app borrows from the Toca Life play pattern, in that you can move any item or character into another part of the app, and multi-touch is supported so that more than one child can play at the same time. You can't record audio or video, however. Fiete, the pirate, shows up as one of the characters, in this nicely crafted, open ended language experience. Specific challenges include: a treasure hunt, drive the pirate ship, cut down trees with a chain saw, make fire, plant a garden, repair a tractor, bake cakes, deliver packages, make a picnic. Developed in Cologne Germany.

Our testing has revealed that Fiete World is "highly desirable" to younger children with playful themes that are "less accurate" than Toca Life. In other words, more fictional liberties are taken with this app. We also noted that the main menu is confusing to young children, because they see specific characters that they want to play with, but the world doesn't immediately gratify their interests.

Details: Ahoiii Entertainment UG, www.fiete-app.com. Price: $2.99. Ages: 4-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: language, co-op play. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 1/1/2019. []
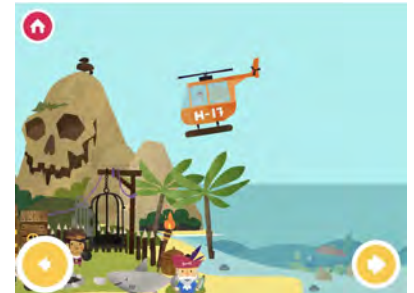
Ease of Use	9	96 %
Educational	9	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	

Magic the Gathering (2020 Update)

Now 40 years old, this is a card-based fantasy game in the same genre of Dungeons and Dragons. It was created in 1990 by Richard Garfield. It can be played by two or more players who represent wizards who can cast spells or summon the creatures that are described on the cards. Today's version can also be played on a mobile device with remote players, which allows you to enter a multiplayer arena. There are two formats: constructed and limited. Limited formats let you build a deck out of a pool of random cards. In constructed play, you make decks from cards you own. New cards are released on a regular basis through expansion sets. There are MTG (Magic the Gathering) tournaments, and the cards vary in value, from a few cents to thousands of dollars. The game is owned by Hasbro, which also owns Peter Adkinson's Wizards of the Coast and TSR (the publisher of Dungeons and Dragons).

Details: Hasbro, Inc., www.hasbro.com. Price: $5 and up. Ages: 12-up. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: logic, memory, math. Entry date: 3/3/2020.

MarcoPolo World School

Modeled after a school setting this subscription service sends children off on "field trips" to learn subjects like The Human Body, Space, Rainforest, Weather and more. The result is a nice blend of actual videos and well designed games. New field trips are added each week, according to the publisher. Content currently includes 1,000 lessons.

Details: MarcoPolo Learning, www.gomarcopolo.com. Price: $5.99/month. Ages: 3-7. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: social studies, science. Entry date: 5/26/2018.

Moxie

Do you live with a moody kid who doesn't get along with others? Here's an attempt to use a machine to tame the beast. Coming "Fall 2020" this is an expensive smart speaker driven robot with an animated face, voice recognition and app designed to deliver a customized social emotional curriculum with challenges to a child.

The robot was designed for school-age children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) or related developmental disorders.

Weekly themes and missions are updated over time, dealing with life skills like kindness, empathy, and friendship. A story mode explores social-emotional concepts, theory of mind, and comprehension. There are exercises to help children manage stress through breathing activities and guided meditation to help develop emotion and self-regulation skills. Uses cloud storage and includes ongoing updates. The cost includes and AC Adapter, plus the robot. You must supply a smart phone and wi-fi access. Download a PDF about the STAR Framework research that this product is based on https://arxiv.org/pdf/2004.12962.pdf

Besides the $1500 initial cost, there is also a $60/month fee.

Details: Embodied, Inc., https://embodied.com/. Price: $1500 plus a subscription. Ages: 6-9. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: social emotional skills, interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, meditation. Entry date: 4/28/2020.

Nighty Night Forest

Wonderful narration and illustrations meet sloppy interactive design, in this continuation of the "nighty night" app series. Unlike the first two apps in the series, there are fewer surprises as you put each animal to sleep, and the animated triggers are not relaxing and are low in child control. For example, in many of the scenes the things you want to touch don't do anything, and some of the routines don't fit with the theme. Once of the animals is a rock musician, who plays over the background music, creating a discordant mess. Stick with the original Nighty Night app.

Details: Fox and Sheep GmbH, www.foxandsheep.com. Price: $3.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: language, causality. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 2 stars. Entry date: 2/24/2020. []

Ease of Use	8
Educational	4
Entertaining	4
Design Features	2
Good Value	2

40 %

Onebot

A modular robotics kit built around LEGO blocks that can be used with Scratch. There are three kits, each with a different price. The basic kit is only for building, and it has the lowest price. The second level, called Robot Builder, contains 800 parts and costs $170. The controller block can by controlled with a laptop, tablet or phone, a Scratch 3.0 based.

The school kit, called The Educational Robot Kit, costs $350 and can e used to make four types of creations -- a piano, an arm and two types of robots. The controler block has motion sensors and is powered by AA batteries.

Details: Beijing AIQI Technology Co., LTD., www.onebot.us. Price: $30-up. Ages: 3-up. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: robotics, LEGO, Scratch. Entry date: 2/7/2020.

Outbreak Squad

Often times things that can hurt you are invisible, which is why it takes good science to figure out what is going on. This is especially true for foodborne illnesses. Your job is to help four cartoon style characters apply their "weapons" (things like a study, a law or an education program) to fight against a potential outbreak monster called Cheesy McPizza. You decide what each character does as you balance your time and money. The four heroes represent the fields of healthcare, education, enforcement and research. In order to win and avoid deaths, all the members have to work together as a squad to balance their resources. Reading is required. This game is excellent for group learning activities in the classroom for grades 5 and up. This game was funded by federal grants, and it was created by a team led by Barbara Chamberlin at NMSU's Learning Games Lab. It was made using Unity and runs on any Windows or iOS. No registration or costs are required; children are not tracked making this an Ethical App. Play the game, at https://outbreaksquad.com/index.html

Details: Learning Games Labs, http://learninggameslab.org/. Price: $free. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Chrome, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: science, food safety, food borne illness protection. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 3/6/2020. []

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

PlayTable

A large (24 inch) Android-based touch screen with the ability to detect physical objects like dice or play figures including Skylanders and Amiibos, providing they are modified with an NFC sticker that can be seen by the PlayTable. The stand-alone unit comes with built in WiFi, two speakers and is powered by an AC power adapter. The goal is to merge digital and physical play. Games include Settlers of Catan, Ticket ot Ride, Game of 49 and Burgle Bros. Weights 15 pounds. Ship date April 2020. A larger (32 inch) version is planned.

Details: Blok Party, www.playtable.com. Price: $400. Ages: 3-up. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: a large Android touch screen. Entry date: 2/26/2020.

Puku

This is a subscription-based collection of leveled word association quizzes designed to expand your vocabulary through fill-in-the blank and multiple choice style questions (reading is required). Wrong answers are recycled, and new material is continually introduced. The more your knowledge "grows" the more a worm grows; a great metaphor for tracking progress and keeping things interesting. The content is specifically designed for upper elementary age children (ages 8-12). Note that the use of this app requires both registration and an auto-renewing subscription.

Details: Merriam-Webster Inc., www.merriam-webster.com. Price: $2 per month. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: language, vocabulary. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 12/16/2019. []
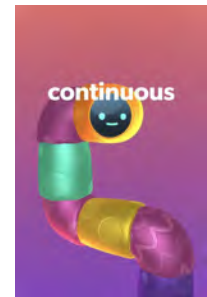

		84 %
Ease of Use	9	
Educational	9	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	7	

Sago Mini School

This is a well designed collection of school readiness activities built around the Sago Mini characters. It is available by subscription. The book-like main menu offers themed collections of activities, based on trucks, bugs, and rainbows. Content includes 50 activities, with new content promised every month. The letter themed games are mixerd up in format, providing doodling, tracing, read-alongs, obstacles, mazes and interactive playsets. A companion Sago Mini Parents app can be used to track progress and store work. It is possible to play without a WiFi connection, and one subscription can be shared between multiple iOS devices. Note that your subscription will automatically renew unless auto-renew is turned off at least 24-hours before the end of the current period.

Details: Sago Mini, www.sagomini.com. Price: $8/month. Ages: 3-5. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: letter recognition, school readiness, math, classification. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 3/31/2020. []
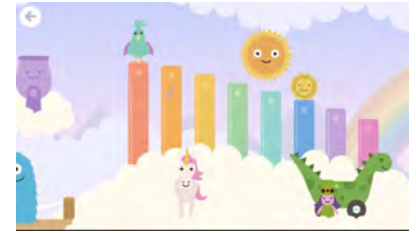
Ease of Use	9	92 %
Educational	9	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	

Scrub Club

A collection of non-interactive worksheets and health themed videos designed to inspired children to wash their hands. Our testers were not impressed by the quality of the art and music in the videos. Note that NSF should not be confused with the National Science Foundation. https://www.scrubclub.org/

Details: NSF International, www.nsf.org. Price: $free. Ages: 4-9. Platform: . Teaches/Purpose: health, hand washing. Entry date: 4/28/2020.

Super Simple

Once you download the app, and subscribe for $6/month, your child can access a large collection of professional quality, often fast-paced animated videos, songs, with some basic level ebooks and fewer games. The entire experience lives up to it's name, being super simple to install, pay for and use. The ebook format is limited. We liked the offline mode, although this app works much better with an online connection. You can't control the background music, which helps to make this service feel a bit pushy. Options include the ability to control the amount of storage. Note that many of the videos can be found on YouTube for free. See https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLl_hUiQfMq3J64t2sdZPYY2RTXIcYVlsg

Details: Skyship Entertainment, https://skyship.tv/. Price: $6/month. Ages: 4-8. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: basic skills, school readiness. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 2/15/2020. []

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

Toca Hair Salon 4

With more pre-designed hair and makeup designs, and a new, ethically presented freemium model, this 4th edition of Toca Boca's most famous app is worth the download.

But it's not the best in the series, due to the complexity of a new two layer menu, and a pre-designed cast of characters that show a great level of creative thinking -- on the part of the app designer rather than a child. The zaniness has been turned up a notch, with new face painting options and more accessories, with offerings of additional content packs for sale. These include Breakfast ($1.99), Weather ($1.99), Underwater ($1.99), and Makup ($3.99). The total cost for the updates would be $10. While there is a shopping bag icon on every screen, children are not required to make a purchase in order to create a hairstyle.

Details: Toca Boca, http://tocaboca.com/. Price: $free with IAP. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android, Kindle. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, hair care. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 3/17/2020. [buckleit]

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

Tori Explorer Pack

Innovative but impractical, this cutting board sized motion sensor works with your iOS or Android mobile device (iPad or Android) to detect hand motion in a new way -- (called "Mirror Play"). The kit costs $130, and includes everything you'll need, minus the tablet. You'll then have to download the apps -- there is one for each of the activity (search on Namco Tori to find the apps). We were pleased with the ease of bluetooth syncing -- the apps do a good job detecting the hardware, and the sensors worked immediately, although you should read the manual to decode the meaning of the colored flashing lights. Our testers gave this kit mixed reviews. While initially very interesting (this kit has very high novelty effect) the games can feel repetitive, and there's very little actual creativity to the play, other than coloring your game controller. The box includes a stylus, catapult, airplane and several cardboard kits that can be snapped together and colored. You charge the sensing plate with any USB charger. A cable in included. More experiences are planned. Winner of the 2020 KAPi Award. Created for Bandai Namco by ISKN.

Details: Bandai Namco Games America Inc., www.bandainamcogames.com. Price: $130. Ages: 6-12. Platform: iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: fine motor, creativity. Entry date: 11/25/2019.

Wanderer, The: Frankenstein's Creature

Winner of the BolognaRagazzi Digital Award 2020.

The classic Victorian gothic novel by Mary Shelley has been reimagined in a digital in a musical, well illustrated world that combines puzzles and an immersive storyline that pulls you into the narrative. There are some dark themes that are handled in a tasteful way. It features a creature born neither good nor evil, traveling through Europe in a search to find its origins and learn about humanity. This journey is emotional and challenging for both the creature and the player as beauty and kindness are often followed by darkness, fear and hate. Depending on the player's actions, the creature evolves differently, which changes the story and the gameplay. The emotional state of the creature is at the center of the game experience: facing a testing situation, its state may vary from anger to madness, through sadness. Note that there are some violent themes.

Details: La Belle Games, www.labellegames.com. Price: $15. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Steam, Windows, Mac OSX, Chrome. Teaches/Purpose: logic, art, reading, literature, emotions. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 2/16/2020. [Ellen Wolock]
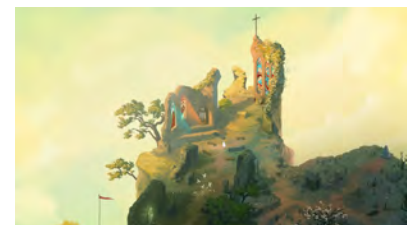
Ease of Use	7	88 %
Educational	9	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	9	