

"The List" 2013 AppCamp

Here's a list of noteworthy products, for better or for worse that we'll be discussing May 16, 2013.

Comments:

- This list is for your personal use only. Please don't use out of context and/or distribute.
- Contact me if you have any questions (warren@childrenstech.com)
- Some of these reviews are in draft form. Please don't quote.



500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/500-hats-bartholomew-cubbins/id589506710?mt=8>

One of the joys of digital media is that you can find all kinds of hidden treasures, of the variety that your local library probably would not have on hand. Take this 1938 story that was inspired after Theodor Geisel (Dr. Seuss) took a train ride behind a gentleman wearing a fancy hat. In the story, a young poor boy has the magical ability to produce hats, which he sells to the king for 500 pieces of gold.

The 31 screen/page story has read to me or let me read modes, and other newer Oceanhouse Media features. You can jump to any page in the story, see objects labeled, and record (and share) your own narration.

Note that this is one of Dr. Seuss' early works. Besides the hat, the illustrations were sketched in black and white. Also note that this is a rather wordy book -- better suited for middle and upper elementary. Teaching tip: Ask a child what the story has to do with the price of vanity.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 6-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Entry date: 1/31/2013.



7 Little Words for Kids

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/7-little-words-for-kids/id598673952?mt=8>

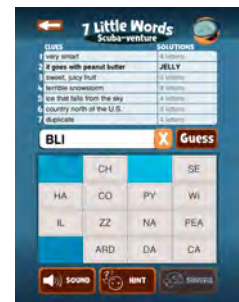
What's another word for an old dinosaur bone? How about a sweet treat? The answer is hidden in a 4 x 4 grid of word squares, each with a bit of a word such as FO, CAN, SS, IL and DY. (Answer: Fossil and Candy).

Each puzzle, which consists of seven words, provides playful language skills experience on several levels. You learn how words are broken into sounds and how they work to build words.

There are seven riddles in each grid, hence the name of this app. The puzzles are grouped by themes that can be unlocked by earning stars, such as museums, down under, frozen fun and spacewalk, each with about 50 words. Features include a hint system, plus it is possible to shuffle the tiles, which can help the clues jump out. Sadly, there is no speech synthesis, so you can't touch and hear the sounds.

There is an external link to the publisher's website in the main menu, and no in-app purchases. The puzzles were designed by Christopher York, who also designed last year's game 7 little words. All in all, this is an excellent language and vocabulary activity for middle elementary and older. See <http://youtu.be/R4bEdyxIL3I>.

Details: Blue Ox Technologies Ltd., www.sevenlittlewords.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 7-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language, spelling, comprehension. Entry date: 3/6/2013.



A Jazzy Day

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/jazzy-day-music-education/id493451508?mt=8>

Designed to introduce young children to Jazz music and its instruments, this app follows two children as they explore the Jazz Big Band, where they discover the sounds of each instrument.

We appreciated the realism to this app -- especially the instrument sounds -- there are no cheesy synthesizers here. In addition, there's a full jazz Big Band arrangement that can be mixed and matched, making it fun to play with various parts of the band to hear how they turn into a "conversation." On the last of the 15 pages, children can test their knowledge with an un-timed quiz that asks children to match a phrase (or a lick) played by each instrument, with the correct picture.

Instruments include the saxophone, trumpet, trombone, bass, piano, guitar and vibraphone. As with many ebook designs, there is both a read to me mode or a read it myself option. All in all, this is an excellent addition to your app library.

Details: The Melody Book, www.themelodybook.com. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: music, jazz. Entry date: 2/21/2012.



ABC Farm

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/abc-farm/id615898597?mt=8>

Your retinal display will sizzle with this collection of 210 (or so) clear open-source photos of farm life, and farm animals. Each is organized by it's starting letter (for example, R is for Rooster). New to this version -- the ability to toggle between Spanish or English. Many of the pictures also have simple letter related games or pre-screened YouTube videos.

Need to know: You'll need an online connection in order to view the videos and the background music can drive you from the room, but it can be adjusted in the parent options. Other apps in the ABC series include ABC Christmas, ABC Zooborns, ABC House, ABC Food, ABC Go, ABC Music, ABC Play and ABC Wildlife. See <http://youtu.be/YvCjVvF0hQ0>

Details: Peapod Labs, www.peapodlabs.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone.

Teaches/Purpose: language, English and Spanish, reading, letters. Entry date: 3/15/2013.



ABC House

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/abc-house-everyday-objects/id522151357?mt=8>

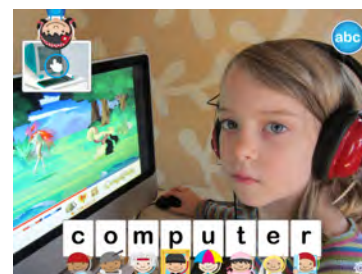
Seventh in the series of the ABC apps from Peapod Labs (see also Music, Food, Baby Zoo Animals, Wildlife, Play and Go), ABC House turns your iPad or iPhone screen into an alphabet-themed visual encyclopedia. Instead of using stock art, however, these apps pull photos from royalty free sources, such as Flickr and YouTube. The result is an authentic presentation of letter-themed items of things found around the home.

You start by pressing one of the 231 thumbnail images, organized alphabetically. Each leads to a letter-themed home item. For C, for example you get a closeup view of a computer or a camera; E is for envelope or eraser. Like the other titles in the series, each featured item is spelled on the bottom of the screen. Touching any of the letters within the word lets you quickly jump to a new set of words, offering a nice secondary navigation technique.

But wait, there's more. About a third of the photos include either YouTube videos or rub-away images, where rubbing the picture of the fireplace reveals the flames. Note that you'll need an active Internet connection to keep the app updated.

Details: Peapod labs, www.peapodlabs.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad.

Teaches/Purpose: language, reading, letter recognition. Entry date: 8/8/2012.



ABC ZooBorns

4.7 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/abc-zooborns/id543646069?mt=8>

Here's yet another well designed alphabet-themed app from Peapod Labs (see also Music, Wildlife, Play, Food and Go).

ABC ZooBorns turns your iPad or iPhone screen into an alphabet-themed visual encyclopedia, based on beautiful photos from royalty free sources such as Flickr and YouTube. The result is an authentic presentation of letter-themed animal photos.

You start by touching one of the approximately 150 thumbnail images (156 as of July 2012), organized alphabetically. Each leads to a letter-themed animal item. For A, for example, you'll get a close-up view of an Aardvark. For E, you see an amazing baby elephant.

Adults can manage app features and create an online account for a child by "reverse pinching" on a parent icon. This involves registering, and makes it possible to sync program menus across different devices; which is a very smart feature.

As with the other Peapod ABC apps, each word appears, letter-by-letter, on the bottom of the screen. Touching any of the letters within the word sends you to another set of words; an excellent secondary navigation technique. Many of the photos include YouTube videos or rub-away images, both great ways to extend the meaning.

Note that you'll need an active Internet connection, both to keep the app updated and to view the YouTube content. The app will still function if not online although we would like a mechanism to buffer some of the YouTube content for dependable use during a lesson.

Design flaws include a direct link to the App store has been included next to the letter "A" in the main menu (not good) and an inability to jump back to an animal that you've just viewed.

Other than that, this is an another outstanding early literacy app that can leverage a child's interest in animals to playfully introduces early language concepts, especially letter sounds, in the context of words. For \$2.99, you can't go wrong. See our video review at <http://youtu.be/LRfDE5XlgY>.

Details: Peapod Labs, www.peapodlabs.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: letter recognition, language, art. Entry date: 7/24/2012.



Adventures of Robin Hood, The

4.5 Stars

From French publisher So Quat! (now named Chocolapps), a rendition of Adventures of Robin Hood, in the form of a 25 page/screen retelling of the classic story, complete with pop-up animations, on-screen text and audio narration and a full-screen cartoon video of the story. You select one of seven languages from the main menu (English, French, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, German and Russian), making this one of the most international App we've reviewed. The HD version, best for iPad, is \$3.99 and a standard version is \$0.99.

The HD version includes mini-games. Children might find the hooded Robin in a crowd, compete in an archery tournament, and storm Prince John's castle to rescue Maid Marian. Other features include: 'touch pronunciation' (touch a word to hear it spoken); "explain to me" (a word's definition and its opposite are given, to provide context for unfamiliar words); "show me" (an illustration displays to represent a word); and "Karaoke reading" (designed to help children learn to read the story themselves).

This is an excellent language experience for any emerging reader.

Details: Chocolapps, www.chocolapps.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 5-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading (English, Portuguese, Spanish, German, Russian, Dutch and French), decoding, parts of speech. Entry date: 1/25/2012.



Alphabeast

4.4 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/ie/app/alphabeast/id488126177?mt=8>

This is a simple flash card app based on the Irish illustrator Chris Judge's picture book, featuring The Lonely Beast.

The 26 interactive hand-drawn scenes feature the Beast (a large, dark hairy creature with two eyes), and his friends as they explore each letter of the alphabet. The animated routines are well designed and work to support the letter/word associations. These include playable musical instruments, dancing robots, spinning bow ties and laughing monkeys. The narration is provided by the author; music is by Simon Judge. All in all, this is a nice addition to your early reading app folder.

Chris Crowell said "My students liked this app. The pages, while limited in interactive use of the touch capabilities, were engaging."

Details: The Lonely Beast, <http://thelonelybeast.4format.com>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: alphabet, letters, reading. Entry date: 2/22/2012.



Alphabet Animals: A Slide and Seek Adventure

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/alphabet-animals-slide-peek/id600589482?ls=1&mt=8>

Letters are turned into beautifully illustrated animals in this simple alphabet-book app that is an ideal way to let children playfully discover some excellent illustrations. You can also make your own namecard out of the animals and save it to your photo library.

The app features the art of Suse MacDonald (the celebrated children's illustrator). You can either flip (swipe) through the animals, tapping to hear the letter, or you can pull a tab, to see the letter that inspired the animal gradually revealed, pop-up book style. As the letter is revealed, the animal animates; a nice touch. Alphabet Animals is a part of the Auracle line from Auryn Inc. and is based on the book by the same name. The bottom line: The interactivity is subtle, and hardly innovative, and alphabet apps are a dime-a-dozen these days. Get this one for its artistic merits. Quick look: <http://youtu.be/1XrpAewvxGw>.

Details: Auryn, Inc., <http://auryn.com/>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Entry date: 3/19/2013.



Animal Crosswords

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/animal-crosswords-english/id523130989?mt=8>

Designed for children just beginning to learn to read and spell, this solid collection of 56 crossword puzzles are based on 300 common spelling words.

Puzzles are sorted by eight animal groups: sea; farm; jungle; pets; small animals; birds; forest; and the zoo. Each crossword has one animal as a theme, so children will get experience spelling 56 animal names. The puzzles in each animal group increase in difficulty from easy to hard.

Features include the ability to switch between uppercase and lowercase letters; the ability to display the entire alphabet or only those letters that appear in the crossword; and a "clean up and start over" mode. Parental control settings let you reset all crosswords and show/hide correct letters in crossword (designed for small children who can't spell completely yet). The game is ad, link and in-app purchase free.

This is an app that grows on you the more you play. Besides being good for playfully introducing site words, it could be a good cooperative learning experience because more than one child can help assemble words by trial and error if necessary.

Details: OkiDokiApps, www.okidokiapps.com. Price: \$.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: spelling, language, logic. Entry date: 6/7/2012.



Animal SnApp: Farm

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/animal-snapp-farm/id563238581?mt=8>

Old MacDonald gets a British twist (boots are called "a Welly", for example), right from Nosy Crow (see also Cinderella) in this make-your-own nursery rhyme. The app is a good choice for the young child.

You start by combining animals whose parts are all mixed up. When the sliding sections match, you have the option of starting a well crafted short story, in which you help the animal solve a problem. Cuddly Cow, for example can't get any sleep, and Diggity Dog has lost his bone. To solve the problem, you visit with the other animals, and there's always a happy ending. Older children will be less than thrilled after a few minutes with this slower paced app; but everyone will like the personable animals. This is an excellent language experience.

Details: Nosy Crow, www.nosycrow.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 2-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: early reading, language, animals, first app. Entry date: 10/24/2012.



Arthur's Teacher Trouble

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/arthurs-teacher-trouble-wonderful/id549865969?mt=8>

First released on CD-ROM in 1993 as one of the Living Books series, this 24 screen, engaging electronic storybook features Arthur and his gang of friends in a typical day at school with their teacher, Mr. Ratburn.

Children can hear the story read aloud and touch many hot spots to see story-related animations. The story is humorous and the graphics, delightful. Features include the ability to toggle between English and Spanish or jump to any page with a new table of contents feature (additional languages can be purchased). Four screens of the 24 screen app introduce the spelling words. There are no explicit activities, but the story line is strong and young children love the characters and clickables. A premium upgrade is available for all three apps for \$2.99 via In-App Purchase, which includes a 40-80 page Classroom Activities guide as well as regular feature updates. French can be added for a \$1.99 In-App Purchase and is included in the "Little Monster at School" and "Arthur's Teacher Trouble" apps.

Details: Wanderful, www.wonderfulstorybooks.com. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 4-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language, spelling, school, Spanish. Entry date: 9/11/2012.



Baby Learning Family

4.3 Stars

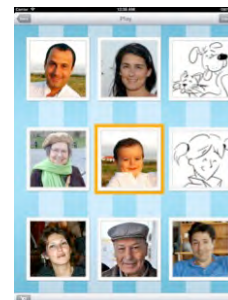
<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/baby-learning/id566164852?mt=8>

Imagine a family photo album, where the pictures could talk? Or perhaps turn into a short movie?

Baby Learning Family is designed to help your baby recognize, identify and interact with all your family members and friends, through a simple touch-and-hear browsing. You can toggle the background music on/off and there are two layout options. You can also adjust the size of the photos and toggle between blue or pink wallpaper.

The design is based on a photo album, where each screen presents several photos that your baby can freely explore. You could use guided exploration, e.g., "Where's Grandma?" or "Where is our house." This could be a good language experience, and you could use it for planning (e.g., take a picture of each area of the classroom, and have a child touch to get a tour of what materials they can use).

Details: Green Basil, www.greenbasilapps.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 0-3. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: parent utility, teacher utility, language. Entry date: 12/13/2012.



Bats! Furry Fliers of the Night

4.8 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bats!-furry-fliers-night/id494297887?mt=8>

Every child wonders about bats. Here's an excellent app for helping them to satisfy their curiosity. Created by Ellen Jacob, Bats! Furry Flyers of the Night is an interactive exploration of bats. There are seven chapters, each with something to do. For example, you can see how a human would look with bat wings. You can even flap the bat wings. The app was published by Bookella and created by Story Worldwide, who did the digital effects using the programming language Unity. This is an outstanding iPad based scientific exploration.

Correction: in a previous review we had written that this app was based on a book. It is an original book-app with original text. Children's book author Mary Kay Carson is the writer of both Bats! Furry Fliers of the Night and The Bat Scientists, but the app is not based on The Bat Scientist.

Details: Bookella (division of jacob packaged goods), www.jpgglobal.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 5-12. Platform: IOS-Apple, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: science, biology, mammals, bats. Entry date: 1/30/2013.



Beethoven's 9th Symphony

? Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/beethovens-9th-symphony/id601942399?mt=8>

Beethoven's 9th Symphony for iPad presents four of Deutsche Grammophon's recordings with the ability to switch instantly between each performance at any point in the piece.

As you listen, you can watch the synchronized musical score, be guided by expert commentary, follow Beethoven's 1825 manuscript or immerse yourself in the graphical BeatMap of the orchestra, highlighting every note.

The app also includes a filmed video interviews with musicians, writers and conductors discussing Beethoven.

This free version of the app includes two minutes from the second movement of the symphony, with all features enabled. The full experience can then be unlocked through In-App Purchase; and no further download is required.

Completing the in-app purchase in the iPad version will unlock the full features of the iPhone edition, which is available on iTunes as a separate app. Purchases sync via iCloud. This app requires iOS6 or later; compatible with the iPad 2 and later iPad models including iPad mini.

Details: TouchPress, . Price: \$free with inApp Purchases. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: music, history, Beethoven. Entry date: 5/16/2013.



Brave: Storybook Deluxe

4.8 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/brave-storybook-deluxe/id529245363?mt=8>

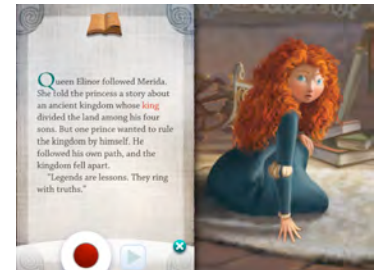
Fans young and old won't be disappointed by this 36 screen interactive app adaptation of the now Academy Award winning movie. Our recommendation? If you've seen the movie, get the app... you won't be disappointed.

Here's why -- Each narrated page is sandwiched between nicely crafted animated transitions that set a new standard for weaving linear movie content with pages. As you swipe to go to the next screen/page, the next scrolling scene unfolds in 3D -- a nice touch that feels akin to sliding slippery panels of glass that suddenly become real. As with other Disney "Storybook Deluxe" apps there are standard but well-designed coloring book pages (4) and jigsaw puzzles (4) extracted from key story scenes, plus a fun, leveled arcade style game where you shoot arrows at trees. You can also hunt for an arrow that has been camouflaged into many of the 36 scenes.

Reading teachers will like the highlighted text that syncs to the narration; plus there's the ability record your own narration. If you like this app, you'll also like the other recent Disney Publishing apps, which can be distinguished by the words "Storybook Deluxe." See also Finding Nemo: Storybook Deluxe, Cars 2: Storybook Deluxe.

This app was developed by Brooklyn-based Small Planet Digital for Disney Digital Books.

Details: Disney Publishing Worldwide, www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com. Price: \$6.99. Ages: 3-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, logic, timing, spatial relations, verbal skills. Entry date: 2/28/2013.



Bugs and Bubbles

5.0 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/app/bugs-and-bubbles/id500195730?ls=1&mt=8>

Fun, fast and good for building emerging math skills, Bugs and Bubbles is the second app we've reviewed from Little Bit Studio. The first, also excellent, was Bugs and Buttons (CTR Feb 12).

This app contains 18 leveled sorting, classification games set in Uncle Bob's Bubble Factory. Your goal is to collect stickers by harvesting bubbles. This requires a lot of low level math skill application, including counting, sorting, remembering patterns -- all concepts that have been part of educational software in the past. But never so beautifully and elegantly. The activities are designed so children drive the action, and the better you do, the greater the challenge. Because there are 18 games and 36 achievement stickers to collect, this app offers a lot to do for the money. You can also manage multiple player profiles, as long as you have "Profiles" turned on in your iOS settings. This lets you save a child's progress on a remote server ("the cloud") so he or she can continue playing on another device (as long as both devices are synced to the same account).

The aesthetics of this app should be noted. Each activity has a different musical background, and the graphics are beautiful, without sacrificing responsivity.

The bottom line. We don't hand out too many five star ratings, but this app has the right mix of fun, learning, and intelligent artificial intelligence that is rare and hard to create. Watch us talk about why we like this app, at <http://youtu.be/IKsIFZdj1Ak>.

Details: Little Bit Studio, LLC, www.littlebitstudio.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad (85 MB). Teaches/Purpose: math, logic, fine motor coordination, classification, patterns, memory. Entry date: 7/24/2012.



Bugs and Buttons

4.7 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bugs-and-buttons/id446031868?mt=8>

Once you get past the idea of touching the swarms of realistic roaches, ants, or bees, children quickly fall for this collection of 18 counting and classification activities. Teachers do as well. Why? Because of the way it playfully engages children's early math and logic skills, of the variety that lie at the root of their future math learning. Oh, and there's also a set of peaceful buttons, to counteract the creepiness of the bugs.

There are two modes. You can move through a series of well designed structured challenges progressively (progress for one player is bookmarked), or you can freely explore.

Management features include the ability to toggle on/off scores, achievements, visual instructions, extended introduction or the background music; all classroom friendly features. The leveling causes the app to get easier if a child struggles. A "bonus mode" presents the hardest challenge.

From basics to advanced, Bugs and Buttons is packed with early math and logic skills. Some that we noted include interactive counting, fast paced sorting, problem solving with path finding, and fine motor skills like pinching and pulling. Several of the activities use the multi-touch features of iPad to make the game great huddleware (for a small group). All in all, there's a nice balance of didactic challenge, mixed with open-ended play in this app, with classroom friendly features that will make any teacher smile. Apps like this help remind you why you invested in an iPad.

Details: Little Bit Studio, LLC, www.littlebitstudio.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: *iPad, iPod touch, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: fine motor coordination, racing, classifying, counting, letter recognition, science, math, logic. Entry date: 1/16/2012.



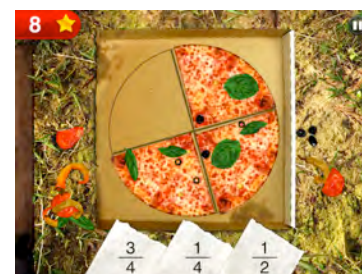
Bugs and Numbers

4.9 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bugs-and-buttons/id446031868?mt=8>

Third in the series, Bugs and Numbers contains 18 games and activities, designed around a bug city. The app is organized into three basic stages, to grow with your child from basic counting to early fractions. Stage 1 features: number and shape identity at the circus; practice left and right on an old arcade machine; seek and find while counting at a junkyard; tap and count while serving food at the local diner; paint by numbers at the gallery; and match numbers and shapes at the hotel. Features of Stage 2 include: count to 100 at the garage; trace numbers and shapes at school; arrange sequencing on a xylophone; comparisons at the theater; sort, count, and tally at the store; and math with 10 on the ferry. And Stage 3 features: US currency on the old claw machine; practice time at the train station; find patterns in the zen garden; work with fractions at the pizzeria; measure length and weight in the lab; and addition and subtraction on the gameshow. The app also features 36 achievements and rewards and multiple user profiles. See Bugs and Buttons (CTR February 2012) and Bugs and Bubbles (CTR August 2012). See <http://youtu.be/aTRiZ3dHxkA>.

Details: Little Bit Studio, LLC, www.littlebitstudio.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: math, counting, logic, classification. Entry date: 12/17/2012.



Build and Play 3D - Plane, Train, Robot and More

4.5 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/build-play-3d-plane-train/id545626598>

Last week, we reviewed Sort and Stack Toys 3D; this week we were thrilled to discover another 3D puzzle from the same publisher. This time children snap together nine machines and vehicles by dragging and dropping the various pieces into place. Incorrect answers just fall back to the side; correct positions fall into place with a satisfying snap.

If the looping background music gets annoying, and it can after a few minutes, you can show children how to toggle it off (or back on, if they like).

Content includes an airplane, car, cement mixer, crane, digger, motorcycle, ship and train. Upon completion each machine starts to work. This is an excellent choice for any early childhood classroom.

Details: Pronetis Kids, www.pronetis.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: logic, classification, shapes. Entry date: 10/9/2012.



Color Uncovered

4.7 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/color-uncovered/id470299591?mt=8>

Turn your iPad into a hands-on exhibit right out of San Francisco's Exploratorium with this collection of 16 light/color experiments. Many have interactive experiments, where you stare at an illusion, or put a drop of water on the screen to see how screen colors are made.

There are sixteen topics that cover art, physics, and psychology of color. In keeping with the hands-on spirit, there are also a few color activities you can conduct yourself using your iPad and simple items you have at home: a CD case, a drop of water, and a piece of paper. You'll never look at color the same way again.

Details: Exploratorium, www.exploratorium.edu/. Price: \$free. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: science, light, colors. Entry date: 12/14/2012.



Count to 100!

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/count-to-100!/id562791055?mt=8>

Teachers take note -- this interactive counting board is a wonderful way to help a child understand the concept of 100, as well as such things as all the numbers in between, by presenting ideas such as "there are twenty 5's that make up 100," or "counting by 12 creates stairsteps."

You start by setting up your number board with a challenge, such as to skip count by 2s, 5s, 10s and 25s. There's also a 'Tap Any' mode to freely explore numbers. We like how the app starts directly by showing the counting board, and the options are easy to find. There are no web links or in-app purchases. See <http://youtu.be/canYevjHBOs>.

Details: FuzzyBees, www.fuzzybees.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math, counting. Entry date: 12/9/2012.



Cutie Monsters Jigsaw Puzzles

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/cutie-monsters-jigsaw-puzzles/id585378286?mt=8&uo=4>

Want to learn to count to ten? Each page of this ten screen storybook features a playful (non-scary) monster with a name like Blushy, Toothy, Golly, Taily, Blobby, Growly and Snouty. There's one for each numeral, from 1 to 10. You can have the story read outloud, read it yourself with touch-and-hear text, or (the best part) assemble the monsters as a jigsaw puzzle.

The puzzles easy to solve (with just three or four pieces), and they do a nice job tying story and numeral concepts together.

Details: Little Phoenix Interactive, <http://littlephoenixinteractive.com>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 1-4. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, some reading. Entry date: 1/25/2013.



Dexteria Jr.

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/dexteria-jr.-fine-motor-skill/id624918435?mt=8>

Three simple, highly structured activities could be useful for introducing someone to multi-touch screens. For example, Pinch the Pepper lets you try out your emerging pincer grasp (the muscles you use when you use your thumb and forefinger to pick something up). Trace & Erase lets you complete simple mazes to connect two points.

The better you do, the harder the challenge. Need to know: This app isn't for everyone. It was designed for Occupational Therapists, but the low price and good design make it of interest to a very young (or old) person just starting to use a multi-touch screen for the first time. See also Dexteria.

Details: BinaryLabs, Inc., www.binarylabs.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 2-5. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: fine motor skills. Entry date: 3/30/2013.



Disney Princess Cinderella

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/cinderella-storybook-deluxe/id579388492?mt=8>

This is a solid retelling of Disney's Cinderella, with three modes, (read it myself, read to me, and record my voice). The graphics and narration are top-notch, and the text highlighting feature, plus the ability to record your own narration, help to make this an excellent language experience, to build word meaning. Content includes a sing-a-long to the classic song "Bibbidi Bobbidi Boo" plus six jigsaw puzzles, each with three levels. There are also six coloring activities. In the story, Cinderella shares her dreams of romance and a better life with the lovable mice Gus and Jaq. When Cinderella's cruel stepmother prevents her from attending the Royal Ball, the Fairy Godmother appears and transforms a simple pumpkin into a magical coach and Cinderella's rags into a gorgeous gown. At the ball, Cinderella falls in love with Prince Charming, but must flee before the stroke of midnight breaks the spell. Developed by Budge Studios for Disney Digital Books.

Details: Disney Publishing Worldwide, www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, memory, language experience. Entry date: 4/26/2013.



Don't Open Before Christmas

4.8 Stars

<http://bit.ly/Qllkq6>

Similar to Doyle & Cummings' first ebook, Nash Smasher! this second app once again features a small boy headed for trouble. This time, 8-year-old Seymour can't resist peeking at his Christmas gift. As the story goes, there is a reason we wrap presents and tie them up with bows -- they aren't ready to hatch. When Seymour unwraps a few, things go very wrong. Thanks to the abundant pull tabs and turntable controls found on each page, you get to help Seymour unwrap, and then re-wrap his presents. The message -- good things can take time and patience; rushing can spoil the surprise. Each animated routine is extremely high in child control, which makes an experience children will come back to time and time again. Other features including a playable xylophone on one page, and a read-to-me option. Written by Bill Doyle, and illustrated by Troy Cummings.

Details: Crab Hill Press, www.crabhillpress.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-12. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: language, causality. Entry date: 10/4/2012.



Dr. Panda's Supermarket

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/app/id609405853>

One of a series of now over ten apps (see also Dr. Panda's Daycare and Dr. Panda's Beauty Salon) this app lets children manage their own supermarket, with ten mini-games that pop up at random. There's a bit of a diner-dash gameplay to the way the jobs appear, which keeps children busy.

There's plenty to do, and the games are fun, with large animated animal characters that need to be assisted and rung up. As a result, there's a lot of sorting (e.g., a recycling machine asks you to sort three types of trash). You find items on a shopping list, weigh fruits and vegetables with a digital scale, scoop up colorful candy, mop up spills, collect carts in the parking lot, run a coffee machine (for mom or dad), and help customers load their groceries into waiting cab or car.

There is no text, the only advertising is for other Dr. Panda apps on the main menu. This can be turned off in the parents section, which has a special locking mechanism ("tap the lock four times to continue"). In addition, all links to the web are only available in this parents section. Testers liked how the animal's eyes follow your finger -- a nice touch. This app is well worth the download.

Details: TribePlay, www.tribeplay.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: logic, math, shopping. Entry date: 3/19/2013.



Draw and Tell HD

4.7 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/draw-tell-hd-by-duck-duck/id504752087?mt=8>

The title says it all with this exciting new creativity app for young children -- the first to successfully mix a full featured drawing program with narration, by way of the iPad's microphone. Now you can think of your iPad or iPhone as a drawing/flannel board and story telling machine. The drawing is just one part of what this app does well. It is paired with a narration feature that makes it easy to do a "color commentary" on the picture you just made. The end result is a powerful language experience. After you finish your picture, you tap a microphone, and are told to "record your voice -- 3-2-1-Go!" As a recording light flashes, you can describe your work. Note that this is a very different process than apps like Doodlecast, where you redraw your picture and talk in real time. With this app, an innovative highlighter is layered over your drawing, letting you highlight features as you talk; a nice touch.

Once you have a picture and a highlighted soundtrack, your work is saved automatically in your photo library, making it possible to share by email. This works backwards as well... you can import images and sketch or talk over them, with a glow in the dark marker, if you like. For pure creative punch, this title offers more than any app we've reviewed, with 22 varieties of paper (including blank), a set of crayons, paints and fine-point pencils. The 156 item sticker library has non-branded, resizable items that can be dragged, dropped, or erased by moving them off the screen. We noted that it is possible for it to become "stuck" under a menu bar; a frustrating problem. In all other cases, there is an undo feature.

Weaknesses include some overbearing cello music -- that is nice -- but on by default. Fortunately you can turn it off, but that requires finding the icon that is only on the home screen.

In the short history of children's apps, Duck Duck Moose (DDM) has more than it's share of home runs, but this one is the most important. It stands a good chance of becoming the "KidPix for the iPad" providing a few bugs are worked out.

Details: Duck Duck Moose Design, www.duckduckmoosedesign.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-12. Platform: iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: language, creativity. Entry date: 3/1/2012.



Duck Duck Moose Reading

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/kindergarten-reading-hd-by/id573698255?mt=8>

Nine fast-paced early reading activities do an excellent job introducing and reinforcing the first sight words, like dog, cat and zoo. The result is an excellent early reading skills activity; for home or classroom use.

The games feature Milo the Meerkat and his sidekick Puffs. Children feed and play with flamingos, monkeys and lions; collecting animals to make a zoo scene. The app teaches letter sounds for all consonants, short vowels, long vowels and consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words.

It also tracks children's progress and shows which letters have been mastered, per the Common Core State Standards. The reading curriculum was developed in cooperation with Stanford's Jennifer DiBrienza, who is also a former K-2 public school teacher; and the design shows.

Weaknesses are minor -- We wish there was a "replay" button for when the child doesn't hear the directions clearly. Example: I can not tell if the directions to finish t-?-n was tan or ten. All in all, this is an excellent early language experience, covering concepts found in any early elementary reading curriculum.

Details: Duck Duck Moose Design, www.duckduckmoosedesign.com. Price: \$.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, decoding, spelling. Entry date: 12/7/2012.



Endless Alphabet

4.8 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/endless-alphabet/id591626572?mt=8>

Here's an extremely strong early reading app that playfully introduces each letter, and shows children how the letters can be combined, like a jigsaw puzzle, to make words. Each letter becomes animated, sounds itself out and then becomes part of a word ensemble to sound out the final word. A narrator then defines the word, and a small skit is shown to illustrate the meaning. Linking word bits with meaning in a playful, child controlled way makes this an extremely valuable early reading experience.

Interestingly, this Endless Alphabet isn't really endless, at least when you first install it. The first version only goes up to the letter G -- the rest of the alphabet is loaded whenever you start the app, as long as your iPad is online. The app is currently free, and we liked how all the external links were hidden behind in a parent screen that requires solving a short reading puzzle in order to access. We did notice a "rate this app 5 stars" message in the child's content, however.

Details: Callaway Digital Arts, www.callaway.com. Price: \$free for a limited time. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: the alphabet, ABC song, reading, letter recognition, music. Entry date: 1/31/2013.



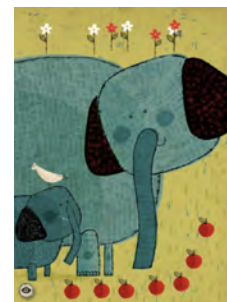
Es Así (It is so)

4.4 Stars

Created in Mexico, this beautiful, touching story deals with a hard but necessary subject; death and dying (or coming and going). The conclusion, after about 14 watercolor and color collage screens ... "it is so." There are no religious messages.

The content comes from a book by Paloma Valdiva. Each page is set to a peaceful piano score. The interactivity is minimal, and the Spanish narration is better than the English. The book could create a context in which to discuss a difficult subject. This is one of the most nicely illustrated apps we've seen.

Details: Fondo de Cultura Economica, www.fondodeculturaeconomica.com. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: Spanish and English, death and dying. Entry date: 4/3/2012.



Fairytale Maze 123

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/fairytale-maze-123/id633819326?ls=1&mt=8>

This is a collection of 20 mazes, each designed around a popular fairytale theme. This is the third in a series of maze-related apps that effectively turn your iPad into an activity center, rich with problem solving possibilities. In one maze, you lead the prince to Rapunzel; in another you help the three little pigs visit their homes in the correct order to avoid the wrath of the wolf. The mazes vary in complexity, sometimes containing multi-stage features. Popular themes were inspired by Pinocchio, The Little Mermaid, Little Red Riding Hood and Snow White. The background music can be toggled on or off, and there are multiple language features, despite the fact that the app has no narration or printed instructions. All in all, this is a solid app that is well worth the download. See the CTR video review at <http://youtu.be/gfDRBmfgYxk>.

Details: GiggleUp Pty Ltd, www.giggleup.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: logic, memory, spatial relations, fine motor development. Entry date: 4/24/2013.



Fantavolieri

4.5 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/it/app/fantavolieri-hd/id465052423?mt=8>

Bird and art lovers, keep reading ... available in Italian and created in Rome, this beautifully illustrated interactive storybook by illustrator Gioia Marchegiani pulls you inside the world of a little girl who dreams about birds. In some of the screens, you can draw your own bird. Drawbacks include a limited amount of content, and it is not possible to jump between pages. It is possible to toggle the background guitar music on/off, as well as the narration. There are some very nice touches in this beautiful app, which is why it was one of the finalists for the BolognaRagazzi Digital prize for 2012.

Details: Gioia Marchegiani, www.marchegiani.com. Price: EU 1.59. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: art, reading, birds. Entry date: 2/21/2012.



Five Little Monkeys Go Shopping

4.5 Stars

<http://www.oceanhousemedia.com/products/5LMgoshopping/>

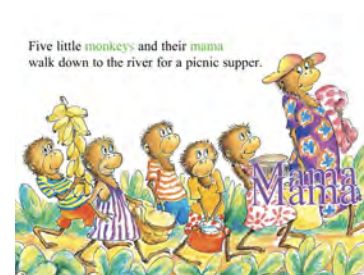
This iPad adaption of the Eileen Christelow books (www.hmhbooks.com) contains another adaptation of the Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed song. This one is enjoyable.

Options let you toggle on/off the busy background music and/or news updates, both on by default.

In the story, Mama takes her five little monkeys shopping for clothes. "Stay right here," she says, "AND DON'T GO WANDERING OFF!" But one little monkey has to go to the bathroom, and two little monkeys get thirsty. Then three little monkey friends arrive, and four little monkeys decide to go help find the others. . . . Will Mama ever have all five of her little monkeys together again?

Chris Crowell: "I showed this app to my students as a large group read along and they enjoyed it tremendously. This is an excellent take on "Five Little Monkeys" theme, which could be a nice springboard for a math activity."

Details: Oceanhouse Media, . Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language. Entry date: 3/23/2012.



Flow Free

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/flow-free/id526641427?mt=8>

This free app (with ads) is easy to start playing, and very hard to stop. The goal is to connect large colored dots on a grid, with a line. The trick is that the lines can't cross.

The better you do, the harder it is to stop playing, so consider yourself warned. There are four level packs: two free and two paid. The free mode offers a "Bonus Pack" which contains additional levels from 5x5 to 9x9 and also an 8x8 mania pack which contains 150 8x8 levels. The 8x8 mania pack might be a good way to challenge experienced players. In the Level Store you can now purchase the Pink Pack which is a Jumbo size pack containing 10x10 – 14x14 levels and you can purchase the 9x9 mania pack. Note that the free version has banner ads on the bottom of the screen.

Details: Big Duck Games, <http://blog.bigduckgames.com/>. Price: \$free with ads/ \$.99 each. Ages: 3-12. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: spatial thinking, fine motor skills, problem solving, logic. Entry date: 11/20/2012.



Foam Fighters Pacific

4.5 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/foam-fighters/id481595868?mt=8>

Foam Fighters Pacific is a set of three-inch styrofoam gliders that suction cup just under your iPhone's outside camera with a special clip. Once the wings are aligned, the app's augmented reality abilities superimpose a WWII dogfight over your living room.

Here's how it works. After the free app <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/foam-fighters/id481595868?mt=8> is installed, you can try a training battle, no plane or purchase required. The real fun, like taking out a battleship floating by your lamp, requires scanning the wing of a plane (sold for \$10). This unlocks one of six missions, based loosely on historical WWII battles. During the demo at this year's Toy Fair, up to eight other players could join the fight over local Wi-Fi connection, a great feature, but one that wasn't working in the version I tested.

If you get tired of the app, the planes really fly, thanks to the weighted nose and durable construction. See the video <http://youtu.be/f5FBD5r8III>.

Details: WowWee USA, Inc., . Price: \$10. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: flying, gross motor control, strategy, timing. Entry date: 2/15/2012.



Focus on Earthquakes

4.7 Stars

This interactive earth science textbook has an amazing and very useful feature -- a real time seismic globe that shows the most recent earthquakes, as they happen. As a result, this is a wonderful way to show a class that we live on a continually moving, shifting planet.

The app is organized in ebook fashion, with illustrations, photos, narrated animations, and slide shows, along with quizzes and review questions to test and reinforce understanding. Specific topics include the causes of earthquakes; the relationship between earthquakes and faults; earthquake waves; seismometers and earthquake detection; locating the source of an earthquake; measuring the size of earthquakes; earthquake damage and large historical quakes; tsunamis, firestorms, landslides, and liquefaction; earthquake prediction; and an in-depth discussion of the relationship between earthquakes and plate tectonics. The app was written by Ed Tarbuck and Fred Lutgens, and illustrated by Dennis Tasa, to be used as an in-class tool or for independent study. Weaknesses include the globe rotation is hard to control.

This is a great way to bring the outside world -- quite literally -- into your classroom.

Details: Tasa Graphic Arts, Inc., www.tasagraphicarts.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 11-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: earth science, earthquakes. Entry date: 3/26/2012.



Foldify

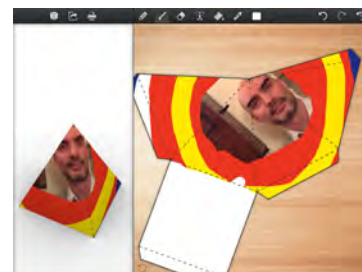
4.6 Stars

<http://itunes.com/apps/foldify>

Once in a while an app comes along that makes you do a double take. Take, for instance, Foldify. It plays with your notion of 2D and 3D space, by letting you scribble on one dimension (the flat, 2D part) and see the result, in real time, on a 3D rendering that you can spin with your finger.

You can do a lot more than just scribble. You can drag and drop clip art onto the cube or use your camera to superimpose a photo onto an unfolded, flat blueprint for a shape, at the same time that you can see your artwork. Note that some of the controls, like importing photos from your photo library, are less-than-intuitive. Foldify was made in Poland by Pixle - <http://www.pixle.pl>, and indie development and UI design trio. Take a quick look, at <http://youtu.be/xSjLjbHcsW4>

Details: Pixle, www.foldifyapp.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: geometry, symmetry, 3D space, spatial relations, creativity, printing. Entry date: 2/28/2013.



Four Little Corners

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/app/four-little-corners/id598573155>

Here's another wonderful adaptation of a printed children's book by Jerome Ruillier, adapted for the iPad by Dada Company, from Spain. It is a delightful story of inclusion, about a square who can't get through a door, because it is the wrong shape. So the square's friends -- all circles -- decide to modify the door. There's not a lot of content with this app; and there's not that much to do. But the animation, sounds and graphics nicely support the story.

Weaknesses include links to other titles at the back of the story, and an inability to adjust the sound. Features are limited - there is no text scaffolding, language options, background music adjustment, or table of contents. Created by Dada Company www.dadacompany.com. See <http://youtu.be/lifcw6A3d3M>.

Details: DADA Company, www.dadacompany.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: social skills, inclusion, bullying. Entry date: 2/14/2013.



Futaba Classroom Games

4.5 Stars

Turn your iPad into a small Smart table with this quiz game, for up to four players at once.

Each player takes a seat around the iPad and taps in to start. A picture or math equation is shown on a spinning turntable in the middle of the screen. Each player is presented with a choice of four answers. The first player to touch the correct word wins a point. Win 3 rounds to get a Futaba (a small 'seedling').

The app features a number of learning sets, including Dolch Sight Vocabulary Words, Subtraction, Multiplication, Telling Time, Currency, Countries and Flags. You can also build your own game content. Our testers liked this app. It provides different challenge levels, and the action is fast. It is also possible to play with any number of players -- up to four.

Details: INKids Pty. Ltd., www.inkids.com.au. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 4-8. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math facts, reading, money sight words. Entry date: 7/16/2012.



Gems and Jewels

4.9 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/gems-and-jewels/id415445861?mt=8>

Similar in design to "The Elements" (one of the first iPad apps, also by Touch Press), Gems and Jewels lets you explore the large collection of glittering treasures on display at the Field Museum in Chicago.

The app starts with a screen full of highly illustrated gems that slowly spin, 360 degrees, on a single access plane. Because the screen is black and the light comes from one direction (we think) the gems look extremely pretty as they turn. You learn that you can double tap any item to view it individually, or pinch to zoom in for a closer look at any item. There are two ways to adjust the angle -- either by swiping with a finger, or by tilting the screen, a new feature for Touch Press. When in the extreme close up view, rotation is reduced to 90 degree angles. Other features include swipe-to-flip text boxes (like looking on the back of the box to learn more) and a "life size" button that shrinks or expands the gems in proper perspective. The reference value of this title is enhanced by the searchable index and updated links to the WolframAlpha encyclopedia.

Content includes 165 types of gems, each with as many as six examples. While this title feels comprehensive, some features could be considered missing. There are no prices listed, so we have no way of knowing the relative value between quartz and diamonds (both look rather similar, after all). There are no game or application features. In addition, we were wondering why gold was included in a title called "gems and jewels." The answer is that the content in this app comes directly from a book by The University of Chicago Press by Lance Grande and Allison Augustyn, that features the gems on display at The Field Museum in Chicago.

As a specialized reference, this app is the best in its class. It should be on any middle or high school science teacher's iPad.

Details: Touch Press, www.touchpress.com. Price: \$13.99. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: science. Entry date: 7/23/2012.



Geography Drive USA

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/geography-drive-usa/id579100969?mt=8>

Fun and light hearted, this well-designed geography trivia game turns your iPad into a set of USA flash cards, drilling you on 750 bits of information. These include state abbreviations, major mountain ranges and rivers, state capitals, and so on. It uses a board-game format to let you move across the USA, unlocking each state, one at a time. Content includes nicknames, postal abbreviations, flags, symbols, rivers, mountains, parks and time zones, important trails and railroads, major cities and attractions.

A question recycling feature gives you a second chance with specific questions. While the game doesn't go beyond the basic facts, it does let you customize cars and garage signs. It is possible to track and score three different players/teams, and a game-based newspaper with headlines recognizes player achievements.

Details: Spinlight Studio, <http://spinlight.com/>. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 7-12. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: USA geography. Entry date: 12/9/2012.



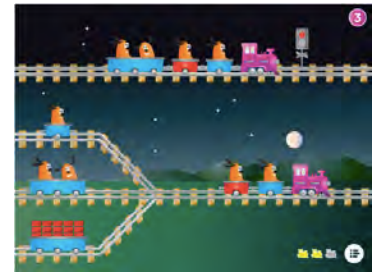
Go Go Games

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/go-go-games/id565022507?ls=1&mt=8>

Three well-designed and well-leveled classification games start easy, and progressively get more challenging. The games are on par with the classic Math Rabbit CD-ROMs, obviously at a fraction of the price, but fully leveraging the abilities of the multi-touch screen. The transportation theme will have a strong appeal to some children. There's a limited amount of content-- we were able to work through all the problems in about 30 minutes. The activities are solid and come out of Stanford, inspired by Pivotal Response Therapy (PRT) methods. This is described as "a behavioral intervention that uses a natural setting and intrinsic motivation to encourage a child to practice responding to increasingly complex sets of features in a way that is rewarding and fun." Don't get scared away from the fancy words -- this is a fun collection of sorting games that would be at home in any formal or informal early learning setting.

Details: Go Go Games, <http://go-go-games.com/>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: special needs, sorting, patterns. Entry date: 11/9/2012.



Going to Bed Book, The

4.5 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-going-to-bed-book-for-ipad/id421933225?mt=8>

This is one of our favorite Sandra Boynton apps, in part because the popup-book animated routines each work so well with the story. In addition, Loud Crow Interactive put a bit more variety in the interactive component of this book.

For example, in one scene, children help all the animals brush their teeth at once, which is a very nice touch. Features include touch and hear narration, and the ability to toggle on/off the narration (by Billy J. Kramer). We looked at the iPad version. All in all, this is an excellent early reading addition to your iPad library. It would make a nice app for a bedtime routine.

Details: Loud Crow Interactive Inc., . Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: reading, causality. Entry date: 3/15/2012.



Goodnight ABC

4.3 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/goodnight-abc/id539568451?mt=8>

Colorful, responsive and fun, this interactive alphabet lets children freely explore 26 screens (one screen per letter), each containing a dozen or so interactive hot spots. Each screen has a day and night mode, plus two additional modes: a coloring activity where you fill in the illustrations with your fingertip, and a labeling mode.

Each screen has a letter-related theme. For B, you can play basketball with Bear; for X you become a doctor with X-Ray Fish. Just about everything you'd want to touch reacts in interesting, multi-level ways.

You can touch, tap, and drag every inch of the screen to uncover more items, set things in motion, assemble and disassemble devices, see and hear vocabulary words, find games and so on. Weaknesses include a rather complex first menu. The day and night mode is clever, although once a screen is asleep, it stays locked until you reset the page. More child control with this feature would be good. All in all, this is a fun, well designed alphabet-themed app.

Details: Goodnight ABC, <http://goodnightabc.com>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, letters, language. Entry date: 7/17/2012.



Green Eggs & Ham

4.6 Stars

Update 9/25/12: New features include: a "Record and Share" option allowing children to share their voice recordings with others that own the app; a page selector; and the ability to turn individual learning features on or off. It is possible to create and save unique narration tracks to go with the story, so, for example, you could have a version with Grandpa's voice; and another read by a child.

Like the other Oceanhouse Media Dr. Seuss titles, Green Eggs & Ham follows the same formula of pulling the text and illustrations from the original Dr. Seuss story, and presenting it, one page at a time.

The story can be presented in three modes: Read to Me (each page is presented, one at a time), Read it Myself (touch the words or pictures to see them labeled) and Auto Play (which presents the story, slide show style).

To turn the page, you swipe the screen, which either presents a new page, or zooms in to highlight one of the features. As with other Oceanhouse ebooks, you can tap any illustration to see it instantly labeled, both with print and by the narrator. This bridging between symbols and audio descriptions is helpful for a child just starting to read, and it makes these games of interest to any reading teacher. The bad news is that there are no hidden animations. We tested the iPad version, and found the graphics to be excellent. Some of the background sounds can be distracting, but can be turned off in the preferences. All in all, this is another strong early literacy experience, from Oceanhouse Media.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad, iPad Universal. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Entry date: 7/22/2010.



Gube

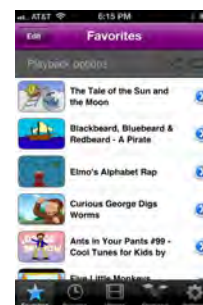
4.5 Stars

Gube is a collection of over 500 pre-screened YouTube videos, each with no ads, and tagged by age. This makes it fun and easy for children to have a large collection of videos to watch, without the worries of inappropriate or low quality of YouTube content.

There's no shortage of science, episodes of existing children's programming like Sesame Street, and silly animals. Note that you'll need a live Internet connection.

The preferences let you filter the videos by age group (infant, toddler, pre-school, and grade school). A favorites list is automatically re-played with the continuous play function. We found no ads or worrisome content. Gube delivers as promised.

Details: Shacked, <http://shackedapps.com/>. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: parent and teacher utility. Entry date: 2/22/2012.



Happi & The Pirates

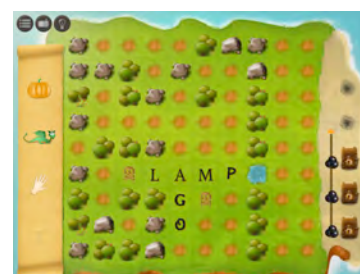
4.3 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/happi-pirates-spelling-math/id622075576?ls=1&mt=8>

It's not often that you find a spelling game combined with a logic game. This is like a mashup of a grid game like battleship with a crossword puzzle; and you are rewarded with a jigsaw puzzle. The design isn't flashy, but the first stages of the game are well leveled, making the entire experience hard to stop playing.

You must use your "spell-power" to uncover treasure chest keys, and use deductive skills to unlock troves needed to search Pirate Island for clues to the final puzzle. When you solve the final puzzle and open the chest, you get a chance to win a real prize -- in this case a real iPad Mini. We didn't make it all the way to the end to see if this offer was real, or how to enter. In general, this seems to be a gimmick-free app with no external links. There are eight language options, and your progress is saved. All in all, there's plenty of content in this app to explore.

Details: Happi Papi, <http://happipapi.com/>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: spelling, math, logic, deductive reasoning. Entry date: 4/23/2013.



Harry and the Haunted House (iPad)

4.4 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/harry-haunted-house-wonderful/id565239081?mt=8>

Mark Schlichting's classic (first published as a Living book in 1994, and as a printed paperback) finally comes to iOS (iPhone, iPad, and iPod Touch) from a new company that has been formed around an old idea. Many of the original designers are involved; including Schlichting.

The story deals with a little boy who accidentally tosses a baseball through the window of a mysterious mansion, and tries to get it back with his friends. Each room of the house is full of animated surprises that are designed to support the story. It is now possible to swipe to turn pages, in addition to the use of the arrow keys. Also new -- a table of contents that makes it possible to jump to any page at any time. Parts of the free exploration are turned off so that the story can be told during the page turn transitions.

The app comes in English and Spanish for about \$4.99, you can buy additional languages and a teacher's guide for \$2.99 as an in-app feature. For those of you with sticker shock, it may help to remember that the cost for the original version of this app was \$39.95.

Details: Wonderful, . Price: \$4.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, Halloween, overcoming fear. Entry date: 10/5/2012.



Highlights Hidden Pictures Puzzles

4.3 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/highlights-hidden-pictures/id567496439?mt=8>

A quick look: <http://youtu.be/Vo5Bd9TIZS4>

These days there are hundreds of apps that ask you to find the hidden object on a touch screen. But for most people older than 20, the original "Hidden Picture" activity was the one that appeared each month in Highlights for Children magazine.

Today, a selection of those same puzzles are on the iPad's multi-touch screen. Instead of coloring the item in, you give it a tap with your fingertip, to see it filled in with color, automatically. The more you find, the more your picture fills in, until the entire scene is complete.

The app comes with 18 illustrations; 9 organized around the theme "Bedtime," and 9 for "Fall Fun." Each puzzle contains between 12 to 27 hidden objects which are presented at the top of the screen by way of a scrollable row of objects. The row of hints can be hidden if you like, to make the game more challenging. There's also a hint system that puts a circle around an item.

The background music can be turned on or off from the parent menu. You can also toggle between three languages or reset the high puzzle scores, which are also saved in the cloud, using Apple's Game Center.

Features include an ongoing scoreboard that remembers which puzzles a child has completed, and a parents menu includes additional puzzle packs (\$0.99 each) and the ability to switch to Spanish or Chinese. Note that all the purchases are hidden away from children two layers deep and behind a sliding button task. Additional theme packs can be purchased for \$.99 each from a parent menu that is locked behind a sliding puzzle.

Details: Highlights for Children, Inc., www.highlights.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: logic, visual discrimination, matching; Spanish and Chinese. Entry date: 2/26/2013.



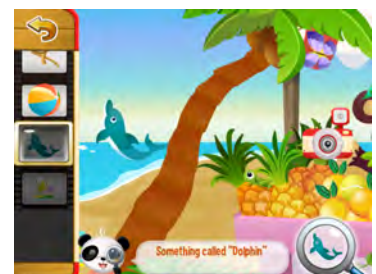
I Spy With Lola HD

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/i-spy-lola-hd-fun-clue-game/id567707551?mt=8>

This app effectively takes the common hunt-and-find play pattern down a notch by way of a series of carefully leveled challenges, clear labels and a playful theme. A hint system helps children when needed. The parents menu, cleverly hidden behind a math equation, contains options for six language options. The different locations have a geography theme such as Egypt. The paid version is worth the \$2 -- there are no gimmicks or in-app purchases to worry about. Note that this is one of many in the Lola library.

Details: Beiz, www.beiz.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: classification, language, word association, vocabulary, shape recognition. Entry date: 11/19/2012.



IBM Think

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ibm-think/id546222093?mt=8>

Free and fascinating, this app turns your iPad into a hands-on museum designed to let you explore some big ideas -- stuff like how different kinds of maps have developed, the role of key inventions, and other big ideas.

Using a sunflower-like main menu, you can explore five idea clusters simply by touching the petals which are labeled seeing, mapping, discover, understanding, believing and acting.

This is the kind of app that is nice to have in your library, to increase the chance that your child might stumble into a powerful concept that just might plant a seed. Runs on iPads running iOS 5.0 or later. Content includes a 10-minute HD film. Note that this is a big 500 MB download. Created by SYPartners, Motion Theory and Mirada.

Details: IBM Corp., www.ibm.com/pc/multimedia. Price: \$free. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad 5.0, 500 GB. Teaches/Purpose: science, social studies, innovation, art. Entry date: 3/13/2013.



Ice is Nice

4.5 Stars

Here's another solid addition to the Oceanhouse Media's "The Cat in the Hat's Learning Library." Ice is Nice is designed to introduce basic science concepts, and reading. In the story, you climb aboard the SS Ice Chopper for an expedition to the North and South Poles to explore Seussian depictions of geography and native animals. Children can touch interactive diagrams to explore topics including how the Earth moves around the sun and affects the seasons, or how specially designed hairs keep the polar bear warm.

There are two ways to read this omBook: Read to Me lets you listen to the narrated story with words highlighted as they are read; and Read it Myself lets you read the book in its traditional form. Other features include animated objects and instant glossary words; individual word highlighting (as the story is read) and words that zoom up when pictures are touched. Weaknesses include an inability to easily move around such a long book (e.g., to get to a specific page in the middle, you have to flip through every page). See the CTR review here: <http://youtu.be/qMWyB6JmcfY>

Details: Oceanhouse Media, . Price: \$5.99. Ages: 5-10. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, science, ecology. Entry date: 7/18/2012.



IdentiKat

4.4 Stars

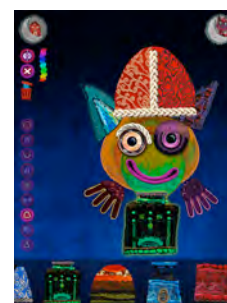
<http://j.mp/YoJlao>

Make your own cat collage, with this beautiful, exotic creativity experience that comes directly from Torino, Italy. There are two modes -- free play and build from memory. The free play mode lets you drag and drop the elements onto the screen. They can be easily resized and moved around, and it is possible to save your work. One minor problem -- throwing away a part is less than obvious. In addition, the screen orientation changes when you move between the main menu and the creativity area.

The build from memory game shows you a cat, and lets you try to rebuild it after the parts are scattered. At any time, you can take a peak at the final product, to get a clue. The best part about this app? The rich-looking materials that were inspired by "Grandma's scrap box." There are beads, felt, brooches, buttons, etc.

The app was inspired by the artwork of Italian artist Cristina Làstrego and designed and animated by professional cartoon producers. It is one of the most beautiful apps we've seen of this variety.

Details: Lastrego & Testa Multimedia S.r.l., www.lastregoetesta.it. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: art, creativity, collage. Entry date: 1/2/2013.



IMAG•N•O•TRON

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/imag-n-o-tron-fantastic-flying/id534396897?mt=8>

This well designed augmented reality (AR) app requires two things in order to work: a camera equipped iPhone or iPad and a copy of the printed (real) book: The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore (\$18 as a 48 page hardcover), which is obviously not included in the \$0.99 app. Once you have these essentials, you're ready to experience the best implementation of AR we've seen.

After you download the app and buy the book you point your camera at any one of the pages to see it come to life. There are augmented reality effects on each page. On one page, you might see the print come to life, with a string of text flying around your room (as seen through your camera). On another page, you'll see a whirlwind of books, flying around you. The narration and graphics are very high quality, and the augmented reality is the best we've seen. The app works with the iPhone 4 or later, the iPod Touch 4th generation or later, and the iPad 2 or later. Note that you may need to adjust your lighting for some of the pages. When sharing this app with a group of children, it helps to use Apple TV or some sort of wireless connection, because you move the screen around so much.

Details: Moonbot Studios, . Price: \$0.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language. Entry date: 10/10/2012.



Inside the World of Dinosaurs

4.5 Stars

This dramatic dinosaur encyclopedia contains a library of 60 animated, roaring dinosaurs, as well as biographical facts on a set of famous dinosaur hunters. Testers noted that some of the objects don't look as clear as TouchPress references, but "they still look cool." You can either explore the screens, one at a time, or listen to each page read aloud by British actor Steven Fry.

Every dinosaur and object can be spun around in 3D motion, allowing you study the visual details such as skin texture and color. You can also view fight sequences from any angle. The dinosaurs feature "real" sounds and animation. Content includes 310 3D models, 60 realistic dinosaurs and 40 recreations of dinosaurs fighting. There's a total of 200 pages of text, and five hours of narration.

All in all, this is a beautiful, dinosaur rich resource. Note that it takes up nearly a gigabyte of storage.

Details: M5859 Studios, . Price: \$14.99. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad (uses 891 MB). Teaches/Purpose: science, dinosaurs, dinosaur facts. Entry date: 2/22/2012.



iPoe Collection 1

4.3 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ipoe-interactive-illustrated/id507407813?mt=8>

Looking for a good scare for an older reader? Designed in Spain but available in English (or Spanish or French), this is a digital retelling of four of Edgar Allan Poe's most famous stories: The Oval Portrait, The Tell-Tale Heart, Annabel Lee and The Masque of the Red Death. This is a typical page flipper, with no narration, and the ability to toggle between three languages (English, Spanish and French). What sets this eBook apart is the subtle presentation of the scary effects that don't push themselves at you. Instead, they wait like loaded springs, ready to spring at you. Each offers a valid graphic depiction of Poe's creepy points. Note that the themes and graphics are intended for an older audience. In other words, this book really is creepy. The best (or worst) part is the last page of the Masque of the Red Death when the mask jumps out of the screen. See the video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFMKiyHc8J8>

Includes a behind the scenes look at the art of David Garcia Forés, which includes some rather scantily clad females. The sound track was created by Teo Grimalt. Note that Collection 2 is also available, which we did not review.

Details: Play Creatividad, www.playcreatividad.com/. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 11-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Entry date: 1/30/2013.



It's A Small World

4.7 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/its-a-small-world/id484670255?mt=8>

Beautifully illustrated with narration by children, accompanied by fully orchestrated background music, the iPad edition of the famous Disney theme-park ride lets you touch-and-explore 16 watercolor scenes depicting various parts of a happy, exotic world where everyone seems busy and happy. And yes, one scene does actually show what could be a cruise ship. Cynicism aside, this is a rare Disney production that is completely free of mouse ears. Walt would, most likely, be pleased.

Each scene contains related hot spots that are well designed and help the story along. Even subtle items, such as the rings of the sun shown in the African scene, can be spun with a swipe. As they move, they give off a rattle sound that fits nicely in the background music. These nice touches help children feel part of these story. Print is used sparingly, one sentence at a time; when touched, the sentence is read aloud, contributing to the value as an informal language experience.

If you're expecting visuals from the famous ride, you may be disappointed. This app is rendered in stylized watercolor drawings. In a refreshing touch, the ever familiar "read to me" and "let me explore" navigation options have sidestepped. Instead, each page advances slowly, automatically, or it can be hurried along either with a bookmark -- in case you want to jump directly to a page -- or with a swipe, that puts the whole production in the context of a balloon ride. The last page includes the famous song, follow the bouncing ball style, and you can tap on the screen to control the fireworks. If you're looking for a nice bedtime book with exposure to quality art and music, this is a good choice.

One word of caution -- make sure you download a current version and use a recent version of the iOS operating system. According to the iTunes reviews, this app can crash. It is also a large download -- at 133 MB.

Details: Disney Publishing Worldwide, www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com. Price: \$7.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPhone 3GS, iPhone 4, iPhone 4S, iPod touch (3rd generation), iPod touch (4th generation) and iPad. Requires iOS 4.3 or later. Teaches/Purpose: Geography, causality, language, music. Entry date: 2/19/2012.



Junior Astronaut - Breaking Through the Space Barrier

4.8 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/junior-astronaut-breaking/id568831665?mt=8>

Rocket science 101 comes to your iPad, nicely explained along with hands on mini-games that make it fun to experiment.

Inspired by the classic space books of the 1950s and 60s, this activity book app is designed to teach children about how rockets work, the launch process and space travel, as well as a general introduction to gravity, weight, mass and thrust.

Activities let you "mix" your own gunpowder as you learn about early Chinese rocketry, and build a rocket to test your knowledge. The app features original artwork from British illustrator, Chris Madden and science consultancy from Adam Mann, Wired's space and physics correspondent. The app contains and original music with real recordings of space communications. See the CTR video preview at <http://youtu.be/VbB2rdM2ziY>

Details: Crank Publishing Ltd, <http://crank-publishing.com>. Price: \$free/\$5.99. Ages: 9-15. Platform: iPad (430 MB). Teaches/Purpose: outer space, gravity, weight, mass. Entry date: 12/9/2012.



Just Going To The Dentist

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/just-going-to-dentist-little/id592226462?mt=8>

Every kid has to go to the dentist -- here's an app that helps with the anxiety. This app, based on the Mercer Mayer print book, is about Little Critter's visit to Dr. Ghum (played by a male hippo -- the assistant is female). When he finds a cavity, Little Critter bravely gets a filling. The visit is painless and Little Critter's good nature reassures kids that going to the dentist can be not so bad.

Features include the ability to find up to twenty hidden creatures on each page (you are shown your count on the last page). The story has excellent object/text association, typical of other Oceanhouse apps, and it is possible to record your own narrator track, which can be saved in case you have to go on a business trip, and your child wants to hear a familiar voice reading the story.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 2-5. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: personal health, going to the dentist, reading. Entry date: 1/23/2013.



Kids Fun

4.7 Stars

Sure, there's no shortage of jigsaw puzzles, games of concentration and mix/match games in the app store. But this app takes the genre up a notch by offering the "two Q's" (quality and quantity), in a highly responsive interactive setting that makes it easy to land in a game that presents a quick challenge.

The app starts with 10 clearly marked icons, each leading to a set of five or so games. Each has a nature or animal theme. Activities include puzzles, matching, coloring, concentration, hide-and-seek, dot-to-dot, and spot the differences. It is easy to get out of any activity instantly, and there's plenty to discover. Features include the ability to adjust the sounds.

This is an excellent general purpose preschool app.

Details: phillieandrevon, <http://philippe.andrevon.com/>. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: matching, causality, shapes, logic, memory. Entry date: 2/21/2012.



Kindoma Storytime

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/kindoma-storytime/id621742145?mt=8>

Kindoma Storytime combines simple eBooks and videochat features, so that books can be read together, over long distances. The idea is that you can share a bedtime story with Grandpa, even though there may be hundreds of miles in between. So does it work?

For the most part, yes, as long as you're using an iPad or iPad Mini that has the free app installed, and the Internet connection is solid. In addition you have to have the app running in order for this service to work. This might requires a setup phone call. Just like Skype. Currently there are 26 books.

Here's how that part works: First, you must download the app and register for an account. This unlocks more books, which are stored in the cloud. Next, you invite your family to connect, by sending them an email. Third, you browse the library and pick out a book to share. When you "invite" somebody to join your network, once you're in a call, you can synchronize to the book, an alarm will sound and the book pages are synchronized turn, either side can turn the page, either side can turn the book. nearly at the same time on both devices. In addition, you can point to things on the page to see a highlighted hand. You can use this feature to highlight words as you read, or ask questions and have the children point to things on the page. Other than the page turns and hand highlighting, there are no interactive features in the books. This service still has some minor quirks and the books seem dry. However, we were able to get it working in a cross-state test. Sure, we could've used Skype, but somehow the Peter Rabbit book made things feel more fun.

Details: Kindoma, www.kindoma.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 2-8. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: interpersonal development, social play. Entry date: 4/5/2013.



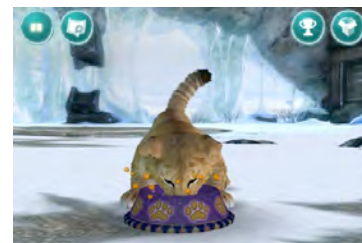
Kinectimals (for iPad)

4.3 Stars

This pet sim isn't as fun or well designed as Nintendogs, but it still has a lot going for it, including very realistic-looking lion and tiger cubs, according to our testers who had logged time on both. Note that some of the games can be a bit clunky to control, and younger children can become frustrated.

With a look and feel that is nearly identical to the Kinect edition of the game, Kinectimals for iPad lets you pet, bathe and teach your large baby cats. The more you play, the more parts of the island of Lemuria that you unlock. There are five total, each with different challenges. For example, you can flick a ball to see how many times your cub can catch it, or swipe up to make your cub jump, in time to a jump rope. You can also transfer your pet to the Kinect, by holding your iPad in range of the Kinect camera. Once it recognizes your cubs pattern, your cub "jumps" into the Kinect game. Finally Apple and Microsoft are playing together. Visit www.xbox.com/Kinectimals.

Details: Microsoft Game Studios, www.microsoft.com/games. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 6-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: timing, logic, memory. Entry date: 12/18/2011.



Know Your USA

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/know-your-usa/id557211549>

Looking for a clean, well designed flashcard program to introduce the states, capitals, rivers and more? This is a good choice. While there is no joy in the presentation, it does let you quiz yourself quickly.

There are two modes -- an Atlas and a Quiz. The Atlas introduces the states, capitals, mountains, major cities and rivers of the USA, by showing a map with push pins marking each key location. Touch a pin and learn the basic facts, presented on a narrated fact card. The quiz mode is timed, and you race against yourself to see how many items you can find. Your accuracy is also recorded. Designed in Ireland, this program was available for years as a software program for the PC (CTR, July 2006). It's nice to see it on the iPad, for a much smaller price.

Details: EdWare Interactive Learning, www.knowyourusa.net. Price: \$.99. Ages: 7-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: US Geography. Entry date: 11/14/2012.



La Forêt Mes Premières Découvertes

4.6 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/fr/app/la-foret-mes-premieres-decouvertes/id475978636?mt=8>

One of the best iPad references for children to date, La Forêt by Gallimard Jeunesse features clear, hand drawn, labeled illustrations, professional French narration, and a well designed table of contents. Features include 3D illustrations that respond to screen tilting, the ability to "paint" seasons with your finger, hidden animals and insects and realistic ambient sounds. Note, that there is no English language option. You can use this title to expose your child to a real immersive French experience.

It all adds up to an excellent science experience, in any language. There are six parts to the app: trees, seasons, life in the forest, flowers, forestry and types of forests around the world. The content is limited, but is of very high quality.

Illustrations are by René Mettler. Developed by Studio v2 for Gallimard Jeunesse.

Details: Gallimard Jeunesse, www.gallimard.fr. Price: EU \$3.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: science, trees, the forest, biology, French language. Entry date: 3/4/2012.



Lee Paso a Paso

4.4 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/lee-paso-a-paso/id550555462?mt=8>

This is a mostly multiple-choice style app, designed to help children learn "the basics" of Spanish. The design is clean, and it is easy to jump around if want to explore a harder level.

The app is geared to both children who speak Spanish as a first language and are just starting to read, and for kids and adults learning Spanish as a second language.

Content includes 175 images, 580 words, and mini-games using syllables to form words, matching words to pictures, completing words with missing syllables, and counting syllables in words. Options let you control the background music and sounds. The app covers 21 letters and 85 syllables (more are planned). You start by choosing a level of difficulty. In Level 1, you follow a methodology to learn step by step one letter at a time; earn prizes as you unlock each level. In Level 2 you choose which letter to practice, have a greater range of words and images to practice with. In Level 3 you can choose which game to practice, all the letters and images are presented in the game in no specific order. There is also a free lite version.

Details: BQWare, www.bqware.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: Spanish. Entry date: 12/17/2012.



LEGO Creationary

4.6 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/lego-creationary/id401267497?mt=8>

This is a timed guessing game, that lets you earn points by correctly identifying which object is being constructed (out of Lego blocks, naturally) on the screen. The sooner you make a correct choice, the more points you earn.

There are six categories of items to identify -- creatures, places, things, costumes, random, and random with double points; the more you play, the greater the challenge. In addition, there are different "packs" of Lego that you can toggle on or off depending on the season.

Options let you turn on/off the background music. This is a fun social game because of the timed element. Testers said "I like the swipe to roll the die, and the depth perception effect used by the die." Because the app is free, what's the catch? To promote awareness in the LEGO kits that are used to make the models. See the video review at http://youtu.be/MPy_PCrMYII

Details: LEGO Americas, . Price: \$free. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: perspectives, logic, classification, memory, spatial relations. Entry date: 7/18/2012.



LEGO Creationary Halloween

4.6 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/lego-creationary/id401267497?mt=8>

Here's a game of LEGO Creationary with a haunted Halloween theme. Like the original title (see CTR August 2012) the timed guessing game lets you earn points by correctly identifying which object is being constructed out of LEGO blocks (naturally) on the screen. The sooner you make a correct choice, from four possible choices, the more points you earn.

There are six categories of items to identify -- creatures, places, things, costumes, random, and random with double points; the more you play, the greater the challenge. Additional theme packs will be available.

Options let you turn on/off the background music. This is a fun social game because of the timed element. Testers said "I like the swipe to roll the die, and the depth perception effect used by the die." Because the app is free, what's the catch? To promote awareness in the LEGO kits that are used to make the models. See the video review of the original LEGO Creationary at http://youtu.be/MPy_PCrMYII

Details: LEGO Americas, www.lego.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: classification, logic, memory, huddle game, social play, spatial relations. Entry date: 10/4/2012.



LetterSchool

4.8 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/letterschool/id435476174?mt=8>

Learning to write letters and numerals will never be the same after a child tries LetterSchool on an iPad's slippery screen. This single app from the Netherlands has raised the bar for all letter/numeral recognition apps. Content includes both uppercase and lowercase letters, as well as numbers from 1 to 10.

One of the most valuable features is the ability to toggle between three types of letters/numeral styles -- D'Nealian (used in many US schools), HWT (Handwriting Without Tears) and Zaner-Bloser (the "traditional" format). We also like how you can bookmark up to three sessions over time, so you can see which letters a child has experienced.

You start with a set of letters (or numerals, if you have it set up in numeral mode). The letters are set on a timed look, and might giggle or meow at you; effective, but potentially distracting. (It would be nice to either tone this down or have a mute button.) There are no cursive letters making this app more meaningful for the younger grades. In addition, we noticed that some of the animated effects, like the bubbles, feel unresponsive.

Each letter or numeral comes with three engaging tracing games designed to introduce the name, sound, and the strokes required to learn it. In Tap, children find the "magic dot" at the beginning of the letter, tap it, and watch as the first part of the letter comes to life. (The letters and numbers might be displayed as grass, that you mow as you trace.) You can then tap the next dots shown at the end of each stroke to complete the next line... when finished you earn a star, and unlock the next game.

Trace requires children to trace the letter correctly all the way to the end to earn a star and unlock the next challenge, Write. In this activity children must write the letter on their own without a helper line. This is the type of app that helps you remember why you paid \$500 for an iPad.

Details: Boreaal Publishers, <http://boreaal.nl/>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: Handwriting, letter formation, numerals, upper/lower case, D'Nealian, HWT and Zaner-Bloser, reading. Entry date: 3/1/2012.



Little Fox Music Box

4.7 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/little-fox-music-box-kids/id499541243?mt=8>

Well illustrated, musical and highly interactive, Little Fox Music Box is a sing-along songbook with 100 interactive elements that have been cleverly embedded in three classic songs: London Bridge, Evening Song and Old MacDonald had a Farm (spelled in the app Old Mac Donald).

Note that one scene (London Bridge) contains ethnic stereotyping, e.g., a group of Asians with slanted eyes, carrying cameras.

Visually, this app makes a great first impression. A good place to start is the studio where you can touch anything to explore sounds and rhythms. Everything makes a noise including birds, frogs and the dishes. We've seen this type of activity attempted many times before, rarely so well.

Features include a Karaoke Mode which can be toggled on or off from the first screen, letting you assume the role of the lead singer; a good way for a child to put themselves into the app. There are also three language options, which can also be toggled on or off. For a good musical, language experience, get this app.

Details: goodbeans, www.goodbeans.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: music, rhythm, German or English, language. Entry date: 6/29/2012.



Little Red Riding Hood

4.7 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/app/little-red-riding-hood-nosy/id626696483>

Nosy Crow has once again raised the bar for interactive folk tales, with this funny, easy to control interactive edition of Little Red Riding Hood that is full of surprises. Don't worry -- the classic foreshadowing of being eaten by the wolf has been preserved when you can see the wolf's tail sticking out from under a bush. But the gory stuff, like being cut open with an ax, is not present. This time, the wolf locks Grandma in a closet, and the wolf is chased away by a scary but friendly spider. Content includes eight routes and nine games embedded in the story, plus the voices of fifteen characters voiced by child actors. There is also text-highlighting to support emerging and early readers. There are several noteworthy interactive features. You can blow into the microphone to collect dandelions, see yourself in a magical pool of water with the front-facing camera, tilt the screen to pour honey into a jar and zoom in or out of several scenes for a closer look. All in all, this is an excellent addition to your child's digital bookshelf; and one of the most notable accomplishments from British based Nosy Crow to date. See the video at http://youtu.be/emR8_vqJdIQ

Details: Nosy Crow, www.nosycrow.com. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: memory, language, logic. Entry date: 4/25/2013.



Little Things Forever

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/app/little-things-forever/id520762327?mt=8>

Do you like search and find puzzles? Here's an update to one of the better options available. It's also the most mellow.

This second edition of Little Things (called Little Things Forever) contains 10 fresh mosaic puzzles based on thousands of "little things" --clothing items, tools, animals and other household items -- cleverly woven into a larger object. You're given a short laundry list of items to search for in the 9 puzzles to solve. There are 11 language options (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Polish, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Japanese and Korean). The puzzles were created in Australia by Matthew Hall; the music is by Vel9 Studios.

Said Hall in a press release; "Android support has been requested ever since the release of the original. Switching the game engine to Unity3D made supporting Android possible."

Details: KlickTock Pty Ltd, www.klicktock.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Android-Google, IOS-Apple, iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: logic, visual discrimination, classification, spatial relations. Entry date: 1/25/2013.



Marble Math

4.5 Stars

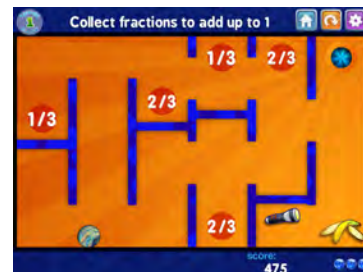
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/marble-math/id528616029?mt=8>

Following the age-old formula of pairing an addicting game with math facts practice, Marble Math (and its little sister, Marble Math Jr.) lets you solve math problems by rolling a marble around to collect the answers. There are two control mechanisms -- you can either tilt the screen, or you can drag the marble through the maze with your finger.

For younger children, the dragging mechanic works best, however, tilting the screen gives the game a fun twist, and mixes in some dexterity practice. Options let you customize your own marble with different designs. A multi-user profile system lets you customize your own avatar for multiple players, and different player profiles. Record keeping tracks the number of games played and the high score. The more you play, the harder the challenge; which ranges from adding two digit numbers with no carrying, to simplifying expressions using multiplication and division.

Runs on either iPhone or iPad and concepts include addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, fractions, common denominators, improper fractions, roman numerals, factoring, decimals and negative integers. There is a "lite" preview version, for no cost. The bottom line? When it comes to practicing your math facts, it never hurts to have a little sugar (fun) to help the medicine (the math facts) go down.

Details: Artgig Studio, www.artgigapps.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 9-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: Math facts, addition, subtraction, spatial relations, money. Entry date: 8/10/2012.



Marvin K. Mooney Will You Please Go Now!

4.7 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/marvin-k.-mooney-will-you/id565691490?mt=8>

Featuring some of the best classic Dr. Seuss illustrations and a story that is perfect for early beginning readers, Marvin K. Mooney Will You Please Go Now! (\$2.99 for Apple and Android) features a clean, uncluttered design, plus excellent text scaffolding that is typical of most Oceanhouse Media apps -- touch any picture to see the word fly out of the text to help you make the word/object association. In addition, you can touch any word in the text to hear it read aloud. In the story, Young Marvin K. Mooney has overstayed his welcome and the narrator has no shortage of ideas how Marvin could go. "You can go on stilts. You can go by fish. You can go in a Crunk-Car if you wish." Missing are the record-your-own voice features. Notice that our first download of this app kept crashing on the iPad Mini.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 4-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Entry date: 10/17/2012.



Mask Jumble Animals

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mask-jumble-animals/id548763608?mt=8>

Here's an app that can instantly put a smile on any child's face. How? It turns your iPad or iPhone into a magical mirror that can turn your face into an animal mask. The app uses face recognition technology (of the variety used in most digital cameras) to "find" your eyes, nose and mouth through your iPad or iPhone's front facing camera. Instantly, you see different ears, eyes, hair and other facial features from ten different animals. As you move, the mask stays stuck on your face; and you can scroll through various parts to test out different looks.

Other content includes a matching game and a strawberry catching game for you to catch in your mouth. When you catch enough you unlock a new animal mask. You can also take pictures of yourself for your in-app gallery, and share custom postcards of the animal-you with friends and family. Note: to render the animal-you, the app must be able to see your whole face clearly, the lighting should not be too bright or too dark, and you must hold the device steady and keep your face centered in the mirror. Note that this app was a bit buggy on our iPad3, crashing unexpectedly but not frequently enough to make the app unusable. See also Mask Jumble Halloween.

Details: Pi'ikea Street, www.piikeastreet.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 4-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (192 MB). Teaches/Purpose: creativity, self esteem. Entry date: 8/28/2012.



Matching Puzzle Cards: Colors

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/app/matching-puzzle-cards-colors/id577752604?mt=8>

This app turns the pedagogy of the flash card inside out, by making each card into an animated two piece jigsaw puzzle that you can snap together the parts.

For example, you are asked to match the pink socks with the pink shoes; you then touch the shoes and they'll do a dance for you. Color words are reinforced through verbal cues and highlighted words.

There are 12 colors and 24 related object words, a song with highlighted lyrics and a game where you race the bunny to collect his eggs. Because it is high in child control, this is a good first introduction to touch screens, with a bit of fine-motor development and language experience mixed in. Music and narration can be turned toggled on or off; a nice touch, and there's a bunny racing game where you collect the colors. All in all, this is a solid, well designed app with limited content. See the video at <http://youtu.be/mctY-6hqcM0>

Details: CJ Educations, www.cjeducations.com/. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 2-4. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: classification, language, reading. Entry date: 12/9/2012.



Math Doodles

4.8 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/math-doodles/id526959716?mt=8>

Math Doodles consists of four hand drawn activities: Sums Stacker, Connect Sums, Unknown square and a preview (but functional) version of Splat GoRound. Each lets you playfully explore mathematical relationships in either timed or untimed settings. A hallmark of the activities is the inclusion of unconventional counting systems. These include braille, Spanish, money, Spanish tally marks, clocks, binary, Arabic and area fractions. Because the puzzles are both high in child control and they let you set your own challenge level, you're more likely to "try the math on for size." This is one of these apps in which you think the puzzle might be too hard, but you find yourself still doing it 20 minutes later.

Note that the author, Daren Carstens is an artist and a math enthusiast on a mission to help children discover the magic in numerical relationships. He has a lot to say about learning: see http://youtu.be/FUV-8vdaL_o. In addition Daren Carstens has been a volunteer at CTR's Dust or Magic conference for many years. There is no business relationship between Carstens Studios and CTR, however, we asked the G&T teacher at Desmares Elementary school to assign the ratings for this title.

Also note that Sums Stacker, one of the four activities, was released previously as an iPhone app (see Sums Stacker, CTR January 2010).

Details: Carstens Studios, www.carstensstudios.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: math, counting, logic, addition, clocks, angles. Entry date: 6/1/2012.



Math to the Rescue

4.3 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/math-to-the-rescue/id557466405?mt=8>

Math drill meets a rescue theme, giving children the chance to practice addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts, covering 1st grade through 5th grade.

You start with a disaster scenario such as a flood, fire or earthquake. Each scene has five numbered victims. To make a rescue, you have to program your vehicle (it might be a boat, fire truck or submarine) using a math equation. When you reach your victim, you are rewarded with a simple animated routine that adds a bit of spice. The top 100 high scores per level are shown on a leaderboard.

While the graphics and responsiveness were of moderate quality, the visual number lines made the app meet its objectives to help children practice math. The only drawback we could notice is with the pacing. Because the animated reward routines happen with each answer, they keep you from racing to solve problems. It would be good if children could fast forward through the routines, as an option.

The difficulty levels adjust the number line setups so that: Level One is 0 to 10, Level Two is 0 to 20, Level Three is 0 to 100, each with increments of 1. When a child plays on Level Four the number line is 0 to 20, with increments of 0.5. Level Five the number line is 0 to 10, with increments of 0.1.

The game asks children to think "what number do I add to 3 to get 7?" or "what number should I subtract from 22 to get 8?" Challenge ranges from $1+X=4$ type of equations to more difficult $(9.3-X) \times Y=4.6$.

Details: Blue Bear Software, www.mathtotherescue.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 6-10. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: math facts, number lines, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division. Entry date: 9/18/2012.



Mathopolis: Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, and Division

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mathopolis-addition-subtraction/id504713012?mt=8>

Like a self-correcting worksheet, this firefighter-themed app is designed to help students learn basic math facts and increase recall speed. It works -- you solve a lot of math-fact problems, in a short amount of time.

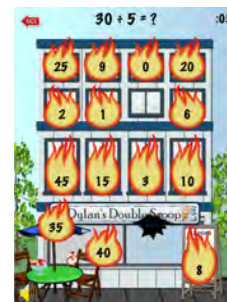
The idea is that children put out the fires by answering problems correctly to save the buildings in the town of Mathopolis. There are sets of problems that include addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division; with number sets from 0's to 12's, including facts up to 12+12 for addition and 12x12 for multiplication. Individual player profiles let you save scores and progress.

There are two modes of play. In the Play Option, you try to complete each level in a game format where a score is earned and you can win medals for completing the level. There are seven games: Addition, Subtraction, Addition & Subtraction, Multiplication, Division, Multiplication & Division, and All Operators. Each game has multiple levels that target specific number sets (0's -- 12's) and culminates with a level that includes all number sets. Each level has three difficulty selections - Easy, Medium, and Hard - that correspond to the length of time given to answer the problems. Scores are based on the number of problems answered correctly and how quickly you answer the problems. You are awarded different medals for completing a level with all problems answered correctly depending on the degree of difficulty.

In the Training Option, you can choose to practice any combination of number sets and operators. You can also choose to work untimed if you prefer. Parents and teachers can gauge student's progress by viewing the medals earned in the game. Options let you turn the sound on/off from any screen in the app. Each number set has a different building from the town of Mathopolis to save from the fire. There are no ads or in-app purchases.

The bottom line -- if you want some straight-up math facts practice without a lot of frosting, this app can work.

Details: TicTapTech, LLC, www.tictaptech.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: math facts. Entry date: 12/9/2012.



Mathtopia+

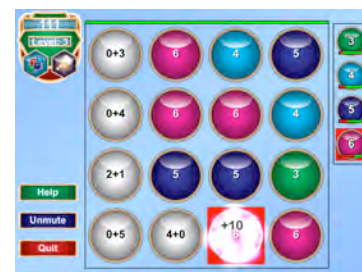
4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mathtopia/id569333308?mt=8&ls=1>

Fast-paced and addicting, Mathtopia+ provides math drills, by putting sums inside a Tetris-like game board. As new numbers drip down the screen, you match the sums as quickly as you can. When they match, the row disappears, and harder numbers fall.

You get immediate feedback, and the easy levels are easy to play, so even a beginner can have a good experience. The design also uses intermittent rewards. The app is sold in several price formats -- Mathtopia offers addition, subtraction, multiplication and division fact modules at \$.99 each, or you can buy the full version (called Mathtopia+) for \$3.99. There is also a free Lite version that contains beginning addition math facts. This app was written by a former State Senator (and yes, the numbers add up).

Details: Omega Labs Inc., www.topshelflearning.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: addition, subtraction, multiplication, division. Entry date: 11/21/2012.



Mazement

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mazement/id605676549?mt=8>

Fast paced and fun, this is a ball rolling maze game where you tilt your iPad in order to move from one level to the next. Along the way, you avoid holes and pick up items to score points.

Each maze has a story based theme (generally related to ghosts or dungeons), and the more you play, the harder the maze. Features include the ability to blast through walls with a Fireball, a "big jump" where you can move up or down a layer, and a beginner-friendly checkpoint feature. All in all, it is a very fun game that fairly forgiving, and hard to stop playing. The game was made in Unity.

Details: Wronghut Oy, <http://mazement-game.com/>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, fine motor, gross motor coordination, logic. Entry date: 4/23/2013.



Meet Heckerty

4.3 Stars

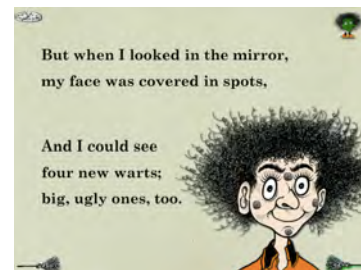
<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/meet-heckerty/id514220257?mt=8>

This eBook for iPad tells the story of Heckerty, a zany, rather silly witch who is trying trying to improve her beauty for a passport photo. She's not helped by a bad case of the warts, snakes that live in her hair (just touch to find them) or eyebrows that crawl around her face in a rather creepy way. Some of the visual effects are a bit unsettling, but they're offset by Heckerty's humorous tone. There's a bit of an edge here, which is helped by your ability to drive the animated actions.

In typical ebook fashion, you can swipe through the pages one at a time, or you can touch left/right broomsticks to manually turn the pages.

In the read-to-me mode, the text is gradually revealed to the reader, in scroll-like fashion. You can pause this process at any point; a nice touch that was appreciated by the teachers who tried the app. The graphics, which are simple yet well done, appear appropriately as the story unfolds on each page, which help to support text. None of the objects are directly labeled. The app was created by Jan Ziff and Allan Davidson.

Details: Broomstick Productions, Inc., . Price: \$free. Ages: 3-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language . Entry date: 4/20/2012.



Monkey Word School Adventure

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/monkey-word-school-adventure/id565951597?mt=8>

Want to learn how to read and write? Apps like this one can help, by making some of the discreet skills involved fun. This is achieved by way of six bite-sized phonics and word recognition games. Each activity features a monkey who jumps around the screen. As you play each game you can earn prizes of living (animated) elements that you can add to your terrarium -- a nice touch.

The instructions given at the start of each level tend to slow you down; a minor problem. There are also in-app branding for the publisher between each screen transition, but no outside links.

Management features include the ability to have three separate profiles (one for each child) along with the ability to toggle the sound on or off. You can also choose between having the difficulty level gradually increase, or you can manually choose between three settings.

The bottom line? This is a well designed, fun early reading activity.

Details: Thup Games, www.thup.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 5-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: spelling, reading. Entry date: 1/24/2013.



Monster Physics

4.6 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/monster-physics/id505046678?mt=8>

This invention construction kit contains 50 puzzles sorted into five challenge categories. In addition, an open-ended "build" mode lets you freely experiment with 68 parts such as blocks of ice, rubber band balls, fruit, wings, bombs, magnets, a mechanical claw, ropes, chains and shapes. You can also just freely build to create a car, crane or a rocket ship.

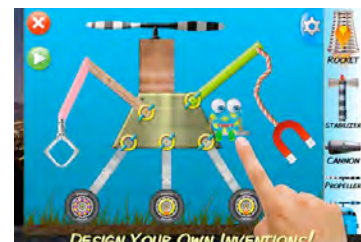
Anyone who has ever played The Incredible Machine knows the format: you start with a challenge, e.g., to get your monster over a bridge. To do so, you line up a set of blocks, ramps and other elements and touch "start" to turn on the gravity. If things don't work, you can debug your design and try again. Progress is bookmarked and saved for up to six player profiles and each can design their own monster.

Testers liked this app a lot, and found the puzzles to be addicting and realistic, but requested hints on some of the puzzles. Of course, this lack of help is also one of the charms of such puzzles. We especially liked how there could be multiple ways to solve the same problem.

Weaknesses are few but should be noted. The view is tricky to navigate when you are in the "build" mode; there are times when your invention might bounce off the screen. You learn how to adjust this with a two finger drag; a technique younger children could find frustrating.

The bottom line? Monster Physics combines plenty of content in a playful yet powerful experience that children will want to come back to play... and experiment; making this a rich educational experience.

Details: Dan Russell-Pinson, <http://dan-russell-pinson.com/>. Price: \$.99. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad (47 MB). Teaches/Purpose: science, problem solving, deductive reasoning, logic . Entry date: 6/1/2012.



Monster's Socks

4.6 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/monsters-socks/id521546698?mt=8>

This 12-screen adventure is about a child-like monster (who is not scary) who wakes up to discover that he has lost his socks.

So he goes on an adventure that includes making a bridge, sailing a boat, and flying to the moon. The story resembles "Where the Wild Things Are" in some ways.

Especially noteworthy: the way this title breaks away from typical page flips and lets you instead freely move forward or backward through the story.

So it is possible to rewind if you want to see another scene again. In addition, there are simple interactive ingredients on each page. For example, you can unfold a bridge to help the Monster get across a stream, a process that is a bit tricky to learn the first time.

Emerging reading experiences are supported by the narrated text blocks, combined with a highly responsive format that children will want to return to time after time. Testers found the monster's English voice to be "strange" (but he is, after all a monster). We did not test other language versions. The graphics are both tasteful and beautiful. Testers also did not care for the anticlimactic ending, where he simply wakes up and finds his socks. All in all this is a wonderful contribution to any virtual ebook shelf. Available in: English, Chinese, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish.

Details: Martin Hughes, www.monstersocks.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, causality, language experience. Entry date: 5/25/2012.



Monsters vs. Superheroes Comic Book Maker

4.5 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id547117153?mt=8>

This third creativity app from Duck Duck Moose lets you make your own animated, self-narrated puppet shows. Like Draw and Tell and Princess, this app is easy to use and powerful. The large collection of animated stickers includes noncommercial characters, cartoon-like items and open ended drawing tools.

The tool kits and features are similar to two previous Duck Duck Moose titles: Draw and Tell HD and Princess Fairy Tale Maker. As with these titles, this new app lets you record your own voice as you move the characters or objects around the screen. There's also a coloring-book-like set of pages where you can touch-and-fill line drawings with a rotating palette of colors.

Characters include Captain Banana Man, Super Dog and Big Foot, each with quotes and sound effects and a wide variety of objects that can be resized. We noticed some weapons that might raise concerns for some adults; these include some knives and a bow and arrow. Nearly all content is best described as playful super-hero themes.

There's plenty of content. We counted 27 background scenes (e.g., skyscrapers, a space ship, the moon, wild west), 170+ animated stickers with sound effects; 29 crayons and 29 colored pencils. These provide support for one of the most important features -- the ability to record your own voice. Minor drawbacks include an inability to rotate stickers, as well as a size limit. In addition there are no sound effects or background music options (you could record your own, if you wanted).

Projects can be saved and then combined into a single timeline, making it possible to stitch different projects together before saving to your photo gallery. The bottom line? This app offers a nice variety of stickers and art. If you don't mind making your own sounds, you can't go wrong for \$1.99. This is the fourteenth app released by Duck Duck Moose.

Details: Duck Duck Moose Design, . Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: drawing, creativity. Entry date: 8/1/2012.



Montessori Numbers

4.8 Stars

<http://bit.ly/montessorinnumbers>

Four number sandboxes in one app are ideal for letting a preschooler freely experiment with the first mathematical relationships using number sets that range from 0 to 1000. It is rare to find an early math app that offers this type of number range and flexibility. Designed in France, the app can be toggled between three English accents: American, British or Australian. You can also toggle on or off the narrator, the timer and the open-ended block building activity. These options let you customize the app for home or classroom settings as well as various challenge levels.

1 to 20 (the first menu option) starts by offering a choice between three levels: 0 to 5, 0 to 10 and 11 to 20. You can then freely drag-and-drop blocks to build the numbers, in order. When your set is complete, you are rewarded by a block building activity, where everything on the screen can be moved around or stacked.

Quantity increases the size of the numbers into the hundreds and thousands, by way of number bars and number squares. If you like, you can hide the numerals to work specifically on the association of number names with quantities. The child can also touch placed beads to make the app count them, and touch numbers to hear their names. There are 3 levels of difficulty: 0 to 9, 10 to 99 and 100 to 999.

Numerals specifically asks you to find a spoken number by dragging numerals into place. Each experiment is labeled in clear speech and illustrated in real time, showing children the size of the numeral they are attempting to build. This is a very strong activity. There are 3 levels of difficulty: 0 to 9, 10 to 99 and 100 to 999.

Numerals (from Quantity) associates a quantity with a given numeral. This time, you're asked to build the number that matches a quantity, displayed as blocks. For numerals greater than 10, this can be hard, because the child has to consider decimals.

We especially liked how this app mixes structure with free exploration. After you solve a problem, you can freely mix and match numerals or blocks on the screen, making whatever you like. This free play mode can also be turned off if you like. YouTube demos can be found at <http://bit.ly/numbersvideo> and <http://bit.ly/numbersvideo2>. This is a must-have app, for any early learning setting.

Details: L'Escapadou, . Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: math, counting, base 10, adding, number sense, in English or French. Entry date: 8/15/2012.



More Trucks

4.5 Stars

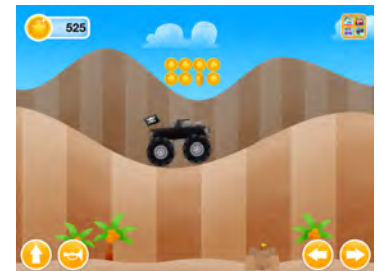
<https://itunes.apple.com/app/id609771588>

This sequel to the first Trucks from Duck Duck Moose offers four fun and playful vehicle-themed activities. Our testers especially liked putting out the fires, playing tic-tac-toe against the firehouse dog, and racing the drag racers.

Girls, don't be put-off by the truck theme. The play patterns driving this app will appeal to both genders and all ages. Some of the activities are tricky at first, so parents be on hand the first time through.

Note that this is the second truck-themed app from Duck Duck Moose. It works best as a one player game. Contents include a side-scrolling game where you move a truck by swiping left or right to get the truck near a burning building. Our 7 year old tester didn't like how the water seemed to shoot past the flaming windows. "Monster Trucks" was a favorite. You drive ten silly monster trucks through changing terrain experimenting with different speeds, directions, and jumps. The final two activities let you use a crane to construct and then knock down stacks of blocks or tow cars to the junkyard where they can be unloaded and stacked. Testers were less enthusiastic about the crane activities -- "it's too hard to build anything." The music in this app is noteworthy, including a sampling of jazz, blues and rock. This is Duck Duck Moose's 16th title and is a solid download. Quick look: <http://youtu.be/aQhmzWyggM4>

Details: Duck Duck Moose Design, www.duckduckmoosedesign.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: logic, fine motor development, temporal relations. Entry date: 3/28/2013.



Motion Math: Hungry Guppy

4.4 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/motion-math-hungry-guppy/id542563075?mt=8>

Designed to zoom in specifically on early math concepts, this fish-feeding app effectively connects your finger with the principal of additive sums, a fundamental number concept that lies at the base of many mathematical ideas. It is the idea that two sets, or representation of sets, can be combined to make one that is larger.

The result is an endless series of math exercises that is both never ending, and self-correcting. The better you do, the harder the challenge. You start with a set of bubbles -- each with a set of one to five dots, and a fish with a number. To feed the fish, you must drag and drop bubbles together, until you make a numeral that matches the fish. If you do, the fish will eat the bubble, and grow larger.

This mix of dots and numbers shows children "as young as two" how math works. The concept of adding quantities might sound simple, but the way it is presented in this app is active and dynamic. The main menu offers four challenge levels, or you can touch a large PLAY icon to start at the last-played level. Besides this subtle bookmarking feature, there are no other record keeping options. Music is a little repetitive but you can turn it off. This is the fifth app from the Stanford University-inspired app studio Motion Math, and the second that deals with a hungry fish. It is an excellent addition to any iPad, especially if it is located in a preschool or Kindergarten classroom. Unlike the previous app, Hungry Fish, there are no in-app sales. You get the entire program for \$2.99. We did not review the iPhone version. <http://youtu.be/ZY3vxOxm1wA>

Details: Motion Math Games, www.motionmathgames.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: numbers, addition, subtraction, math. Entry date: 6/13/2012.



Motion Math: Wings

4.6 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/motion-math-wings/id508228412?mt=8>

Fast paced and engaging, here's yet another excellent example of how touch screen and motion sensors can pull children into a concept.

If you've ever played a game like Doodle Jump or Scoops, where you lean the iPad screen from side to side in order to climb higher, you get the idea of Motion Math Wings. In this case, you're a bird, soaring from island to island. To make progress, you must quickly choose between two sums that might be represented either as a numeral or as a set of number cubes. In order to avoid getting pushed back, you must choose the larger numeral, at least in the level I tried.

At the easy level, which is free, you start with sets of dots -- a challenge preschoolers can handle. Next, you fly into labeled grids and finally symbols like (4×5) . There are ten levels to unlock, and eventually buy as an in-app purchase. If you were to buy all the content, it would cost \$6.99. The more you fly, the more swag you can earn for your bird. This game contains beautifully orchestrated music, a nice touch. The bottom line? This is an excellent app to have in your learning toolkit. The engaging format pulls kids in. Just be aware that you'll eventually hit a wall where you need to pony up some in-app money.

Details: Motion Math Games, www.motionmathgames.com. Price: \$free with in-app sales. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math, logic, counting, quantities. Entry date: 5/13/2012.



MyScript Calculator

4.8 Stars

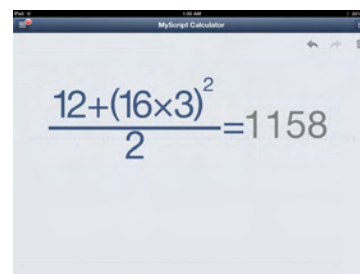
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/myscript-calculator/id578979413?mt=8>

Times tables meets penmanship, in one single free app. It can transform your iPad or Android device into a smart mathematical slate.

You start by writing, using your finger, any numeral or mathematical expression, such as $2 + 2$. Your imperfect-looking numerals suddenly melt into a perfect math equation, along with the answer. To get rid of a number or expression, you just scribble it out. There's also a back key, that lets you easily undo a mistake.

Supported mathematical symbols include $+$, $-$, \times , \div , \pm , $\frac{1}{x}$, $()$, $\%$, $\sqrt{}$, $x!$, $|x|$, e^x , xy , x^2 , \cos , \sin , \tan , \arcsin , \arctan , \ln , \log , π , and e . This type of app could give a child another way to practice math facts, and fine motor skills needed to write, all using a touch screen.

Details: VisionObjects, . Price: \$free. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: Mathematics, addition, multiplication, subtraction, division. Entry date: 1/23/2013.



NASA Science: A Journey of Discovery

4.6 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nasa-science-journey-discovery/id541482963?mt=8>

This app is organized around four questions that have driven NASA research: What are the effects of space weather on the Earth's technology?; How are Earth's sea ice sheets changing?; Are there other habitable planets?; and Was Mars ever a habitat for life?

Each leads to an encyclopedia-like set of interactive info-screens, of the variety that you can imagine at a kiosk in a hands-on museum. You can swipe through photos, watch movies, and play with interactive maps of Mars or the Earth's glaciers. The information comes from various NASA missions. For example, the Kepler Mission is an effort to survey a region of the Milky Way in search of other Earth-like planets, by way of a 9 foot diameter satellite equipped with a very sensitive photometer. Using this app requires a lot of reading, and there is very little sugar coating. That's why it should be in every upper elementary and middle school iPad.

Details: NASA, <http://science.nasa.gov/connect/apps/>. Price: \$free. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: space travel, STEM, Mars. Entry date: 9/4/2012.



Nick Jr. Draw and Play

4.3 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nick-jr-draw-play-hd/id513414742?mt=8>

Chatty and powerful, this creativity activity kit gives children new, fun ways to fill an iPad screen, incredibly fast. Serious drawing and coloring is also an option, too, thanks to a responsive palette of tools that include many shades of fine-lined colored pencils.

Work can be saved to either an app-specific library, or your iPad's photo library. It is also possible to share work via email or facebook, and toggle sharing options off if you're concerned about your child sharing work on facebook; a nice touch.

The app starts with a blank canvas and a lower tray with a large variety of drawing tools that include crayons, markers, charcoal, colored pencils, spray paint, paint brushes, water colors and a collage maker. It feels like there's a never-ending supply of tools and shades of colors to try. One thing we couldn't find, however, is a fill option. Our testers also noted that the clip art library is Nick-themed, and limited. Where this title excels is also a weakness. It gets too random, too fast. You can spread swirls of paint splatters, animate lines with a set of colored magic wands, or discover animated Dora characters hiding inside surprise blocks, which also might contain characters from Bubble Guppies, Team Umizoomi or the Backyardigans.

While this app is a bit chatty (with Dora chiming in with such dumbed-down narration nuggets as "tap the eraser if you want to erase something") this app does a great job giving children a lot of different ways to create in a multi-touch medium. It was created by Cricket Moon Media, Inc. for Nickelodeon Kids and Family Games Group.

Details: Nickelodeon, www.nick.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: creativity. Entry date: 5/31/2012.



Numberlys, The

4.7 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/numberlys/id491546935?mt=8>

Pricy but amazing, The Numberlys (\$5.99) will go down as perhaps the most zany alphabet book ever made. It comes from the studio that created The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Lawrence Lessmore, directed by William Joyce and Brandon Oldenburg of Moonbot Studios. The experience blends art and interactive surprises that support the compelling story.

You start with a story, told by a comical narrator with a thick (perhaps Russian) sounding accent, who tells the story of a grey society that has no letters or words -- only numbers. Based on the art style, it also has no colors.

As you swipe your way through the story, you help a small group of friends convert numerals like "8" into letters like "B" or "R" by shooting missiles, slicing the letters in half, bouncing on trampolines, spinning turntables, and so on. There's a routine per letter, giving you plenty of surprises. There is even an intermission -- a first for any app we've reviewed -- right after the LMNO. The navigation system makes it easy to jump between pages, and there are options that let you turn on/off the help and/or the narrator.

The art mixes grey industrial art styles from the 1930's (a Metropolis look), with a totalitarianism, Big Brother theme. Because of the way in which the art, interactivity and story work hand-in-hand, this title was awarded an honorable mention in the 2012 BolognaRagazzi Digital awards.

Details: Moonbot Studios, www.moonbotstudios.com. Price: \$5.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, art, music, the alphabet. Entry date: 3/14/2012.



Nutcracker, The

4.3 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-nutcracker-by-timbuktu/id595959391?mt=8>

One of the 20 noteworthy titles identified by the Jurors of the BolognaRagazzi Digital prize, Timbuktu's Nutcracker by Francesca Cavallo and Philip Giordano uses an innovative vertical (up and down) scrolling technique, where the activities and ideas unfold. The content is limited, however. If you design eBooks for children, this app is worth your consideration.

Details: Tibuktu Labs, www.timbuktu.me. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: language, some logic. Entry date: 2/9/2013.



Oh No Fractions!

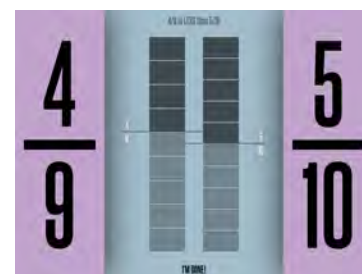
4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/oh-no-fractions!-curious-hat/id593418681?mt=8>

In the right of passage determined by any standard elementary school curriculum, every child needs to know if $5/8$ is more or less than $1/2$.

Here's a free app that can help. It lets you compare two fractions, side by side, to determine which is larger or smaller. You can use a sliding set number lines to prove your answer visually -- creating an excellent teaching prop. It is possible to adjust the denominator to any size, making harder or easier comparisons. It would be ideal for any elementary teacher who deals with fractions, not only to provide drill, but as another way to show how fraction relationships work.

Details: Curious Hat, www.curioushat.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: math, fractions. Entry date: 1/30/2013.



Oh Say Can You Say Di-No-Saur?

4.5 Stars

The second in the The Cat in the Hat's Learning Library series, Oh Say Can You Say Di-No-Saur is an improvement on the last, with more carefully crafted interactive routines that a child can control. While dinosaurs is not typically a subject we recommend for younger children as a "science" topic (they can't conceptualize the abstract time/size relationships), this is an excellent high interest reading title.

Cat in the Hat is the host (and the narrator) who takes us on a fictional expedition to find dinosaur fossils. This includes a trip to the modern day Super Dino Museum, where animated dinosaur visuals are hidden on each page. Each page has developmentally appropriate content for both younger children as well as capable readers, making this a good all-purpose app. For example, hidden information cards from Thing One and Thing Two provide more facts such as "Ankylosaurus: This 30-foot-long dinosaur had an armor-covered body and a club tail it could swing from side to side. A well-placed blow with its tail could break the leg of a T-Rex!"

Note that there are 2 step links to Oceanhouse Media products on both the main menu and the last page.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$4. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, science, dinosaurs. Entry date: 2/22/2012.



Oh the Pets You Can Get

4.2 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/oh-pets-you-can-get!-all-about/id577277383?mt=8>

Great for beginning readers, this is another solid addition to Oceanhouse Media's "The Cat in the Hat's Learning Library." If you've used any previous Oceanhouse Media titles, you're familiar with the features.

Oh the Pets You Can Get" contains factual information, presented in a playful way, to let children discover the sound and look of hundreds of common words. In the story, children help the Cat in the Hat (who is a vet) take care of cats, dogs, fish, guinea pigs and more. All information is factual.

There are two ways to read this omBook: Read to Me lets you listen to the narrated story with words highlighted as they are read; and Read it Myself lets you read the book in its traditional form. Other features include animated objects and instant glossary words; individual word highlighting (as the story is read) and words that zoom up when pictures are touched. Weaknesses include an inability to easily move around such a long book (e.g., to get to a specific page in the middle, you have to flip through every page). Visit www.seussville.com for more information.

There is no table of contents (it is not easy skip around in the story) and you can't record your own voice; a feature that is being implemented in some of the other Oceanhouse Media books.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$5.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language, word recognition. Entry date: 12/7/2012.



Orchestra, The

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-orchestra/id560078788?mt=8>

Dissect the inner workings of a working symphonic orchestra, with this well crafted, immersive musical experience.

Content includes eight carefully documented performances by the England-based Philharmonia Orchestra (<http://www.philharmonia.co.uk>). To make the app, cameras were placed throughout the orchestra during each performance, and key members of the orchestra were interviewed, so you can hear their thoughts about each part of each song, in real time, as it is played. In addition, as the music plays, you can watch the score scroll by.

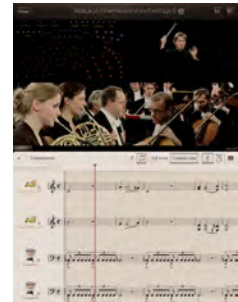
The app contains performances of a sampling of classics designed to show off the diversity of an orchestra. These include Haydn: Symphony No., Beethoven: Symphony No. 5, Debussy: Prélude à l'après midi d'un faune, Mahler: Symphony No. 6, Stravinsky: The Firebird.

As the music plays, you can touch to explore the score of any instrument, from the perspective of the conductor. If you have no interest in music, you can view a simplified representation, with the notes shown as pitch lines.

You can explore the working of each instrument by way of traditional reading, watching videos, or hearing musicians explain their role in the orchestra. The text was written by Mark Swed, a music critic of with the LA Times. The app was created by Touch Press, in partnership with the Music Sales Group and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Two things you need to know. This is a big app -- 1.95 GB, so the download can take a while not to mention it can fill up your iPad. It's also pricy, at \$13.99. Our testers -- comprised of both musicians and non-musicians found the app amazing at first, but quickly lost interest. For music teachers or music students, this is a must have addition to your library.

Details: Touch Press, www.touchpress.com. Price: \$13.99. Ages: 7-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: classical music, orchestra. Entry date: 12/17/2012.



Picture Me Trick or Treat

4.4 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/trick-or-treat-picture-me/id561975843?mt=8>

Using the iPad's camera, this electronic edition of the printed Picture Me book lets you put up to eight of your own photos inside the story, peeking out of windows on the pages. The story, which is told in a rhyming narrative, is about children getting ready for trick-or-treating. The paper version is by Deborah D'Andrea, and it is published by Picture Me Press.

The graphics are clear (the candy corn looks so good you could eat it) and the sounds work well with the story. Unlike the first edition, more of the interactive elements can be controlled by the child. For example, you can rearrange the candy corn on the screen. While all the interactivity isn't tied directly to the child's touches, the idea of putting your own photos into the story works like a charm and is very easy. You can snap a photo with the device camera, in real time, or choose from photos in your own library. Photos are easy to position into the pages. We didn't like the email or photo icon on each page (a toddler could possibly take hundreds of screen shots - with supervision, this shouldn't be a problem) and it is not possible to easily jump to specific pages in the story. Also missing, Oceanhouse Media's trademark labeling system, where the words pop out of the screen, and fly over the objects they represent.

If you've ever wanted to see what you look like in a fuzzy puppy costume, this app will give you a chance. See also Picture Me Cute as Can Bee.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, creativity, language. Entry date: 10/4/2012.



Pitch Painter

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/morton-subotnicks-pitch-painter/id519738403?mt=8>

Music educator Morton Subotnick has a long history of using computers to help children learn and apply musical concepts, which is why we were pleased to test his latest app. This is a musical finger painting app that lets children create music, while introducing them to a variety of musical instrumental sounds and authentic scale tunings from four regions of the world. Features include: select 3 instrumental sounds from each of 4 different regions of the world; the ability to hear what you are creating as you paint it using up to three fingers at one time.; play the "canvas" in many different ways; hear exactly how you painted it; hear it as a normal piece of 'written' music played from left to right; hear how it sounds upside down, backwards; scrub it like a DJ; erase notes you don't want; save and load your compositions; and detailed instructions for parents and educators.

Need to know: The menu is rather cryptic, but once you figure it out, there are a lot of cool effects to try. For example, you can make a song and then flip it upside down, or hear it backwards.

Details: Morton Subotnick, <http://creatingmusic.com/2012/pitchpainter.html>. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-5. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: music. Entry date: 4/9/2013.



Pixel'd

4.6 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/pixeld/id529626244?mt=8>

Ease of use meets power with this new creativity app, that combines straightforward animation tools with Disney characters. The app is free, but you must pay for extra stickers or backgrounds, which are sold directly in the menus. You can draw with lines, geometric shapes or fill with different (mostly Disney) branded backgrounds.

Features include three drawing layers on the canvas; 20 frames for creating animations; shape tools with adjustable squares, circles and triangles, plus a starter set of free stamps and fill patterns featuring Disney Princess, Bolt, Mickey and Friends, Cars and Vintage Mickey. In-app purchase options offer "expanded sets" of Disney character stamps and fill patterns for \$.99 each. An innovative Buddy Draw option lets multiple artists connect via Bluetooth or Wi-Fi to draw together in real-time. Visit <http://disney.com/pixeld>. If you don't mind the commercial themes and are knowledgeable about the in-app purchases, this is worth the download.

Details: Disney Interactive, Inc., www.disney.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 7-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: creativity. Entry date: 7/24/2012.



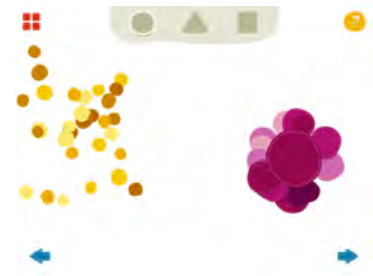
Play 123

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/play123/id500024209?mt=8>

Here's a collection of ten "virtual manipulatives" -- innovative minigames that are easy to learn and full of responsive play opportunities that encourage discovery of some key number and logic concepts. Rather than being told what a triangle is, you get to sketch one; and later, pop it to make room for more shapes. There are several color-related activities, including one where you can discover how red and blue equals purple, and another where you spin a color wheel into motion to mix colors. Because the multi-touch features are enabled, more than one child can play at the same time. Even though this is a free app, we don't like the links to additional apps in iTunes in the main menu. Also bad: the sugary-sweet English narration; but neither are fatal flaws. The innovative design merits a download. See the preview video at <http://youtu.be/mdissKySflw>.

Details: CJ Educations, www.cjeducations.com/. Price: \$free. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: math, logic, memory. Entry date: 11/19/2012.



Playful Minds: Math

4.6 Stars

Want to see what the home-based math curriculum of the iPad age looks like? Designed by the highly regarded French app developer, GameLoft, Playful Minds is a well-designed \$3 iPad-based math curriculum that packs a punch. You get a leveled, K-2 math curriculum, mixed with an assessment system along with a set of arcade-like games to reinforce the content -- all for the price of a cup of coffee (that's nice coffee, for our office).

After you login (with an email address) you see a series of islands, each with an animal professor host, along with a game-board. Each stop represents a new set of problems. This visual metaphor works nicely, helping children know where they are in their math education. The problems are mostly multiple choice or correct answer. They've been pulled from "Skill Sharpeners Math" -- one of many inspired by the NCTM standards for K-2. Content includes 300 exercises and mini-games organized around Algebra, Geometry, Data Analysis, Measurement, and Numbers & Operations. Directions and explanations are displayed in print and by narrator; the app can handle up to five children. Features include the ability to adjust sounds and toggle between US or UK English.

While the initial cost (\$3) is low, consider also that your child will encounter in-app sales in the store. Here's how that works: as they play, children earn items such as clothing for their avatar. In the store, they are shown better items, sold for more coins. They are sold in units of 1000's and cost roughly \$2 for a complete set of clothing. It is possible to buy \$100 worth of coins. To gain access to the progress reports, you need 10,000 coins; about \$10. All things considered, the price seems reasonable, and it is possible to play through the games unhindered by in-app sales. But it is important for you and your children to know how these types of apps make money.

The activities are well designed -- very clean, and fairly high in child control. Children can escape at any point, and they can see where they are in the curriculum. The main drawback is that there is a rather narrow window of time in a child's development when starting this app makes sense. All in all, this is an important new app to keep an eye on. We'll hope to see more in the series.

Details: GameLoft, www.gameloft.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 5-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: math, logic. Entry date: 1/19/2012.



PlaySquare: WordWorld's Happy Birthday Dog!

4.5 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/playsquare-presents-wordworlds/id536304087?mt=8>

Billing itself as "touchable television", this innovative new app mixes interactive play with TV- quality video, from the PBS show Word World. The result is a solid language experience, with a chance to play with letters and words to apply some of the concepts.

In case you've missed a recent Word World episode, objects like houses or dogs are made out of words, helping children make the connection between clusters of letters and the items they represent. The designers, who include former Nickelodeon TV producers, have nicely integrated some multi-touch features.

To start, a child enters the story by finger drawing a square when prompted. This launches a series of linear media segments that can be easily skipped or fast-forwarded with a set of controls at the bottom of the screen. By giving the child this innovative set of controls, children can settle down and watch the video, or skip ahead.

Content includes nine squares, each with a different vignette, and each with a set of challenges such as "can you help bear find a set of five balloons?" There are plenty of spelling challenges that might include finding a set of hidden letters and squeezing them together to make a word, required to move the episode along.

Sometimes the letters that made up the characters bodies were reading from right to left instead of left to right (from a reading pedagogy view, a minor glitch), but overall we found this app succeeded in delivering a playful child controlled experience with about 25 nouns like barn, dog, bear. This is the first in a planned series. This app, Happy Birthday Dog! is available free and works only on the iPad. Future episodes are planned which will be available as in-app sales. Note that this can be a noisy app (like TV) perhaps making it better suited for home rather than classroom use.

Details: PlaySquare, LLC, <http://playsquare.tv>. Price: \$free. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: Letter recognition, letter sounds, vocabulary, word recognition. Entry date: 8/24/2012.



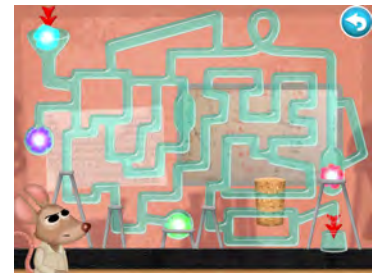
Preschool Maze 123

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/preschool-maze-123/id593710986?mt=8>

Following Toddler Maze 123, Preschool Maze offers 16 more easy to play and solve, generally well designed mazes, each with different themes that include pirates, aliens and penguins and more that you must help to navigate twists and turns on their journeys to complete their mission. Each maze features a new adventure and a character who needs your help. The mazes increase in difficulty the more you play, providing new challenges to master. Features include: 16 unique mazes with different scenes and characters; multiple levels of difficulty; printable mazes that you can send to your email to print out; interactive animations; and an original background music track that can be easily switched on or off.

Details: GigggleUp Pty Ltd, www.giggleep.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: logic, spatial relations. Entry date: 2/26/2013.



Princess Fairy Tale Maker

4.6 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id527336678?mt=8>

With a core design nearly identical to Draw & Tell (CTR March 2012) this open-ended creativity experience is designed to let children play with princess-related themes. Besides the ability to freely draw and drag-and-drop stickers, children can record and play back their own puppet shows, which can also be saved.

If you're looking for Disney-style graphics or Barbie-like princesses, you won't find them in this app (the designers at Duck Duck Moose are also parents of young girls).

Is it possible to have a princess-themed app that is non-gender-biased? Perhaps. If so, this one comes close.

There are some minor weaknesses. We would like the clip art to be easier to resize using traditional pinch and pull multi-touch mechanics (instead you have to deal with a resizing box). Adding new clip art to a picture requires two touches -- one first to select, the second to move onto the screen. There is no "traditional" coloring mode; instead pictures are auto-filled with the colors or patterns you choose. We especially liked how you can import your own photos into this app, to mix with the large non-commercial library of clip art.

Now even Grandma or the pet dog can be the princess. All in all, this is another powerful creativity experience for children based on a popular theme.

Details: Duck Duck Moose Design, . Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, pretending, princess. Entry date: 6/1/2012.



Pyramids 3D—Wonders of the Old Kingdom

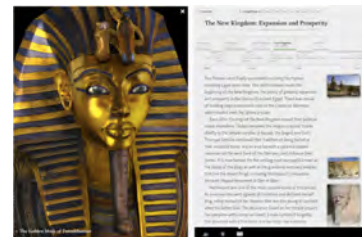
4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/pyramids-3d/id557865627?mt=8>

Can't afford a personal tour of the Egyptian Pyramids. Here's a beautifully illustrated \$14 option, fresh from Touch Press. You start with a helicopter view of the plateau where the pyramids, tombs and the Sphinx are located— at Giza near Cairo, Egypt. As you "fly" around the map, you can tap one of the three main pyramids, the Sphinx and eight tombs, to fly inside with the company of an authoritative-sounding British guide (Bram Calcoen). To move through a tunnel, you spread two fingers (or pinch to move back) -- a movement mechanic that takes some getting used to. Most of the interesting paintings or items are explained by way of pop-up text boxes. Noteworthy features include the ability to toggle between "then" and "now" settings on 35 of the paintings, letting you see immediately the effects of thousands of years of aging. Features like this help remind you why you spend \$500 on an iPad.

You can also touch an area of the painting for details on such things as pulling papyrus stalks, or force feeding geese. This curiosity-driven learning is compelling, leading you further into the stories behind the artifacts. Other features include 3D photography by Sandro Vannini, an interactive version of a book by Egyptologist Zahi Hawass, and 350 photographs and 40 objects that can be zoomed and spun to view from every angle. These include Tutankhamun's mask (the light changes as you move your iPad) and the Solar Boat, which can be looked at from every angle. Pyramids 3D—Wonders of the Old Kingdom is created by Touch Press, the people behind the best-selling iPad titles: The Elements, Solar System. This title is produced and published in partnership with Heritage World Press and Laboratorio Rossi.

Details: Touch Press, www.touchpress.com. Price: \$13.99. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad (1.1 GB download). Teaches/Purpose: history, ancient Egypt, pyramids, mummies. Entry date: 10/17/2012.



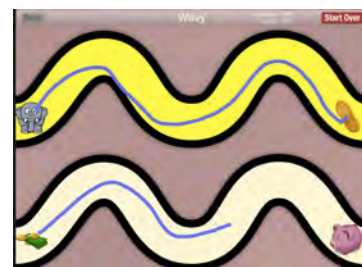
Ready to Print

4.4 Stars

Teachers, take note of this app. Ideal for helping a child practice the fine-motor skills needed to make letters, this is a set of nine leveled touch screen exercises that was created by an Occupational Therapist. The idea is to use the iPad's multi-touch screen to replace, and improve upon, tried and true paper-based exercises.

The activities are nicely leveled, progressing from pre-writing skills to letters. You start by touching objects (e.g., butterflies to make them fly or bubbles to make them pop) and move up to tracing within lines. The final levels consist of upper or lower case Zaner-Bloser letters, and, as a treat, an open-ended free drawing activity. Visit <http://www.ReadyToPrintApp.com> for more details.

Details: Essare LLC, www.ReadyToPrintApp.com. Price: \$9.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: letter recognition, upper & lower case, handwriting, fine motor development, special needs. Entry date: 4/23/2012.



Ride a Pony with Kate and Harry

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/app/id568844022>

Good for a child's very first app, this open-ended experience lets you decorate your own pony using a set of clear multiple choice menus, and then take it for a ride. There are no in-app purchases or ads.

Need to know: The art is a bit over the top, and silly, which may or may not appeal to your child. We liked the ability to choose between a male or a female lead character, although there is a mild "prince saving the princess" theme.

Details: Very Nice Studio, www.verynicestudio.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-5. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: creativity. Entry date: 11/6/2012.



Rita the Lizard

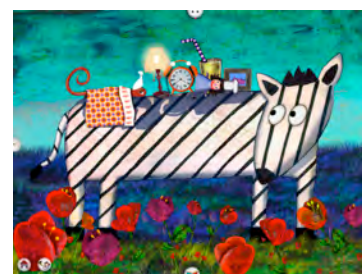
4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/rita-la-lagartija/id568650448?l=es&mt=8>

We review a LOT of ebooks, but few are as beautiful as this 14 screen interactive masterpiece from Spain. Based on the print book, this eBook tells the story of a tiny lizard with an identity crises; Rita thinks she's a chameleon like her uncle William, and you must help her find herself. Each page has something interesting to discover.

There are 14 scenes and two reading modes (Read to Me and I Read and Play). Other features let you touch, drag elements, and rotate the screen. In addition, in each scene, a "secrets counter" shows you what still remains to be discovered. If you discover the secrets, you win a prize. We also liked that it was possible to record your own narration. Drawbacks include the buttons are a little small (even on the regular sized iPad); and there are self promotional links, including links to social media on the last page.

Details: Irene Blasco Studio, www.ireneblasco.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, art. Entry date: 12/17/2012.



Rounds: Franklin Frog

4.3 Stars

See also Rounds: Parker Penguin.

This innovative app stretches the definition of ebook, with a dash of Nosy Crow irreverence. Rounds: Franklin Frog is the first title in a series of non-fiction apps that deal with life-cycles. Children can participate in a G-rated version of each stage of frog reproduction, helping a male frog hop, swim, croak, eat and find a female to reproduce. Next comes eggs and changing from a tadpole into a frog. The entire experience is high in child control, creating an excellent way to introduce children to the basic concepts of reproduction, without embarrassment.

Because the app is based on three generations, you play the app three times, with different characters (Franklin, Franklin's Son and Franklin's Grandson), hence the word "rounds" in the title. This is the first time we've seen this type of circular design, similar in ways to a play with different actors using the same sets. As you explore, you discover frog facts: that they drink through their skin and chew food inside their mouths by squashing it between their tongue and their eyeballs. The app makes it easy to swipe to guide frogs with your finger, to make them jump, swim and catch flies. You can help them croak to attract a mate, and you watch a tadpole gradually turn into a frog. Features include quality orchestrated background music that seems very relaxing. There are three reading level settings, and the text highlighting can be toggled on or off, in case you want the child to read by themselves.

The app is illustrated by Barry Tranter. The narrative is written by Emma Tranter. All in all, this is an excellent new addition to the ebook genre that is worth the \$4.99.

Details: Nosy Crow, www.nosycrow.com. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 3.1.3 or higher). Teaches/Purpose: science, life cycle of frogs, biology, reproduction. Entry date: 8/8/2012.



Rounds: Parker Penguin

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/rounds-parker-penguin/id577753717?mt=8>

The second in the a series of non-fiction apps that deal with life-cycles, Rounds: Parker Penguin lets children participate in a G-rated version of each stage of penguin reproduction, beginning with helping a male find a female. Next comes eggs, babies and so on... The entire experience is high in child control, playfully showing children how penguins develop through their reproductive cycle, completely without embarrassment, and letting them participate by cracking the egg (with a tap) or sliding toward the ocean (by tilting the screen).

Because the app is based on three generations, you play the story three times, with different penguins (Parker, Parker's Son and Parker's Grandson), hence the word "rounds" in the title. It is similar in ways to a play with different actors using the same sets. As you explore, you discover penguin facts. Features include quality orchestrated background music that seems very relaxing. There are three reading level settings, and the text highlighting can be toggled on or off, in case you want the child to read by themselves.

The app is illustrated by Barry Tranter; narrative is written by Emma Tranter. All in all, this is an excellent new addition to the eBook genre that is worth the \$4.99. See also Rounds: Franklin Frog.

Details: Nosy Crow, www.nosycrow.com. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: science, life cycle of penguins, biology, reproduction. Entry date: 1/5/2013.



Ruff's Bone

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ruffs-bone-interactive-storybook/id601996502?mt=8>

A good book meets solid interactive design, in this updated iPad edition of the classic Living Book. If you're in your early 20s, you might recall the CD-ROM edition of the story.

Ruff loves his "Sunday bone" but he can't find it. Each of the 12 screens contains an exotic location. This includes a trip into a dark sky and a hunt on the moon to find it. His determined search leads us down a deep, dark hole, into a cave, high up into the clouds, to the bottom of the ocean and even up a ladder to another planet. The app is available in English and Spanish. The graphics, adapted from the CD-ROM, appear a bit fuzzy but our testers didn't mind. The interactive gags still hold their charm. The story is by Eli Noyes.

Details: Wanderful, www.wanderfulstorybooks.com. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 2-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language, Spanish, English. Entry date: 3/28/2013.



Sago Mini Forest Flyer

? Stars

FROM THE PUBLISHER: Sago Mini Forest Flyer (Launch: May 23) sends children on an adventure of guiding a bird to different areas on the screen to uncover fun animation sequences. The open-play environment allows kids to take the engagement in any direction or path – they are in control. Some may gravitate to certain actions and watch them over and over, while others will treat it as a race to uncover as many animations as they can. In nearly all cases, children will begin to narrate their activity. Here is a sneak peek video: <http://www.sagosago.com/>

Details: Sago Sago, www.sagosago.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations. Entry date: 5/13/2013.

Sago Mini Sound Box

? Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sago-mini-sound-box-fun-sounds/id640709006?mt=8>

FROM THE PUBLISHER: Sago Mini Sound Box (Launch: May 16) engages children through visuals and sound allowing them to explore at their own pace. The app features layered functionality – kids tap to create a sound, tap in different areas to get different notes, fling them around, tilt the device and see them move, tap with multiple fingers for specially-colored balls and tap and hold for a fun surprise. Some children find themselves repeatedly tapping and holding for the fun animations while older kids will figure out how to play a little tune like a piano.

Details: Sago Sago, www.sagosago.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 2-4. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: causality. Entry date: 5/13/2013.

Scott's Polar Trip

4.4 Stars

<http://itunes.com/apps/scottspolartrip>

In this original story, Scott arrives at the North Pole on his submarine, accompanied by Jazz the cat. While there are fictional elements, many of the pages are based on real content.

In the story, a Inuit boy named Inook helps Scott, and shows him how people live in the Arctic Circle. Content includes four games drawn from Inuit life and customs: the blanket toss; building an igloo; looking for murre eggs; and setting up an inukshuk. The parent options let you choose from two reading levels. The parent options are a plus, but we didn't like the "review our app" link on the main menu.

Details: Square Igloo, www.squareigloo.net. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: reading. Entry date: 10/18/2012.



Slice of Bread goes to the Beach

4.4 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/slice-bread-goes-to-beach/id431477144?ls=1&mt=8>

Featuring an excellent story with good narration and illustrations, this 15 screen/page ebook tells the story of what happens when a slice of bread visits the beach. The animated effects support the story, which is written, narrated and illustrated by Australian Glenn Melenhorst, the author of Food Fight.

Features include animated page turns, touch and hear text highlighting and a "read to me" mode, in case you want to just listen. Some pages have "micro" games -- such as when you move the bread to avoid the seagull, or brush the bread crumbs to feed some ants. In the end, the slice of bread finds a friend.

It is easy to toggle on/off sound, or jump to any of the pages. All in all, this is a nicely designed story, with good story elements effectively combined with some interactive features.

Details: Jelly Biscuits, www.jellybiscuits.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language, beach related words. Entry date: 3/15/2012.



Sofia the First

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sofia-the-first-story-theater/id587649152?mt=8>

It's always nice when a good story meets a well designed activity. Why? Because children can make the ideas come to life. Case-in-point, this animated storybook app for iOS devices.

The story is narrated by ABC Modern Family's Ariel Winter, and the other characters of the TV show, as well as Sara Ramirez from Grey's Anatomy as Sofia's mother.

Interactive elements are minimal and there are no text-scaffolding features. The story is a good one: Sofia learns that looking like a princess isn't all that hard but behaving like one must come from the heart. As with many princess/king/queen scenarios, there are inherent gender and cultural bias overtones in the story. The font is a non-conventional script that might bother some teachers.

The best part is the digital story theater (like Toontastic) which lets you record and animate your own version of the story. There is a minor glitch -- the playback window is smaller than you think. All in all, this is well worth the download. See our review at http://youtu.be/3nj_M9OiYs.

Details: Disney Publishing Worldwide, www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: reading, creativity, language. Entry date: 1/15/2013.



Solar Walk - Saturn

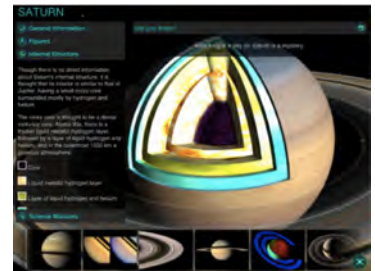
4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/solar-walk-saturn/id559702509?mt=8>

Ready to be dazzled by some out of this world graphics? This is the free, teaser version of Solar Walk (CTR July 2010) which focuses only on Saturn's view of the solar system. The full version of the app (\$.99) gives you all of the planets. You can easily pull or pinch your way around the solar system to see the solar system from the view of Saturn and its moons (Mimas, Enceladus, Tethys, and Dione), speed up or slow down time, and discover astrophysical relations with the flick of a finger.

The celestial objects in the app feature an Information Tab that brings up data about the object including size, mass, orbital velocity, history of missions, and structural layers of planets and their atmospheres. Each object also has a media library with images and a newly added section with interesting facts. In addition, the preset Bookmarks will show you Saturn and its rings from different angles as well as the view of Saturn from Enceladus, Titan, and more. Features include: 3D mode (3D glasses required); 3D Model of the Milky Way Galaxy; zoom and rotate Saturn and satellites; Time Machine; Big Screen - connect a second display to view Saturn on a big screen providing you have the cables and a projector. There's also an ad-like movie that highlights features of the app.

Details: Vito Technology, www.vitotechnology.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: solar system, Saturn. Entry date: 10/5/2012.



Sonnets by William Shakespeare, The

4.8 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sonnets-by-william-shakespeare/id528646395?mt=8>

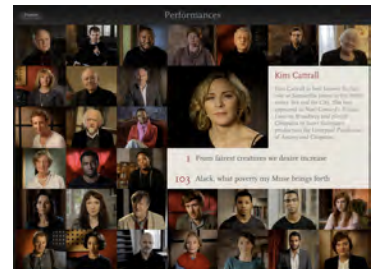
Ready to sample from a buffet of masterfully spoken English? The Sonnets by William Shakespeare is waiting, providing you don't mind the \$14 price of admission.

The heart of the app is a collection of 154 readings performed by famous actors and Shakespeare scholars. As you listen, you can watch the score of the Sonnet which has been synchronized to the reading, line by line.

Additional content includes interviews with scholars such as Katherine Duncan-Jones, James Shapiro and Henry Woudhuysen. You can also see a copy of the Sonnets as they first appeared when published in 1609. You can also add your own notes, which can be shared via various social media outlets.

Every so often we review an app that makes us wish we were back in high school or college taking classes that we admittedly struggled with at the time. Knowing we would have greater understanding and interest in a subject if we had exposure to certain apps that utilize the technological advances of today excites us for modern students. The Sonnets by William Shakespeare is one such app.

Details: Touch Press, . Price: \$13.99. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: Shakespeare sonnets, reading, language, English, poetry. Entry date: 7/18/2012.



Sort and Stack Toys 3D

4.8 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sort-and-stack-toys-3d/id545625065>

Jigsaw puzzles apps -- where you drag and drop the pieces into place-- abound. But few are designed as well as Sort and Stack Toys 3D. Designed in Romania, the colorful app was inspired by existing stacking toys, where your job is to figure out how things fit together using color or shape clues.

There's plenty of room for trial and error -- the mistakes simply drop to the bottom of the screen, which makes experimenting fun.

Options let you toggle the background music on or off, as well as the sound effects. An easier hint mode can be toggled on from the main menu, which makes it possible for very young children to succeed with this app. The puzzles are fun because the pieces "snap" into place -- just like real parts, and you are rewarded with animation and sounds when they fit into place.

Content includes 12 puzzles, each in 3D and arranged from easy to harder. Chris Crowell said "I thought this might be below my (kindergarten) students level but they love playing with it, and I was able to see some gaps in their development with regards to sorting and classification." All in all, this is a must download app for any ECE setting.

Details: Pronetis Kids, www.pronetis.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-7. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, shapes, colors, numerals, animals. Entry date: 10/9/2012.



Spacecraft 3D

4.5 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/spacecraft-3d/id541089908?mt=8>

Extremely amazing, but limited, this augmented reality (AR) app lets you explore different NASA spacecraft used to explore our solar system. To use the app, you need to first print a sheet of paper containing a marker, needed to unlock the spacecraft. Current options include the GRAIL (at the moon) and Curiosity rover (on Mars). You can print the marker directly from your mobile device, or have it emailed to an account of choice. After you have your sheet of paper, you lay it on the table and line up your iPad or iPhone's camera. Presto -- a 3D model of Curiosity rover pops up on your screen. You can move around the craft, and a set of buttons on the bottom of the screen extend the robotic arm. There's not much to do, but what there is will grab your interest, and imagination. You certainly can't argue with the price -- \$free.

Details: NASA, <http://science.nasa.gov/connect/apps/>. Price: \$free. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: space travel, NASA, exploration. Entry date: 8/22/2012.



Stack the States

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/stack-the-states/id381342267?mt=8>

Do you know the state flag for North Carolina? Or which state borders Canada? This multiple-choice quiz game rewards you with more than a correct answer. You get a chance to drop the state onto a platform -- a process that also makes you more aware of a state's unique shape. Content includes the names, locations, major cities and sizes of the US states, plus flags.

Wrong answers disappear along with an explanation, but correct answers, give the the ability to drop the state.

The goal is to earn enough states to build a stack that reaches a high water mark. Because the states are depicted to scale (Texas is huge) you learn more than just facts. You also see how complex borders can be.

When you complete a level, you earn a new state that is placed on your personal map. The goal is to win all the states. Records are saved automatically, for up to six player profiles. See also Stack the Countries.

Note that the free version contains ads for other Dan Russell-Pinson apps, as well as prompts to upgrade on the main menu. But it's free -- so fair enough.

Details: Dan Russell-Pinson, <http://dan-russell-pinson.com/>. Price: \$.99. Ages: 7-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: geography, USA states. Entry date: .



Storia

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/scholastic-storia/id491014756?mt=8>

Scholastic's answer to Amazon.com is Storia (<http://www.scholastic.com/storia>), a book-centric leveled children's ebook store targeting a variety of screen types and sizes, both computer or tablet.

For the iPad version, which we tested, you first download the app, which includes five free books including a Goosebumps, although every opportunity is made to get you to sign up for a Scholastic account. We tested the samples and found all aspects of the Storia experience to be solid and easy to use. Features include the ability to quickly jump between shelf and list view, so if you have a lot of books you can browse your titles alphabetically. Other nice touches include the ability to switch skins. The books look as if they are scanned versions of the printed pages. Once a book is downloaded, it lives within the app, along with a customized dictionary. Features include some excellent navigation features, silky smooth page turning and a no-frills dictionary system. Some of the books are marked with a lightning symbol, which means they have been enhanced with word puzzles or some other type of comprehension game. The design is clean and responsive throughout. The books look as if they were digitized directly from their printed counterpart, complete with the warning not to buy this book if the cover is missing (good luck with that one).

Other features include the ability to highlight sentences or take notes that are saved with the book. Of course, the strength of any ebook delivery system is the library. In that department, few can match the resources of a company like Scholastic. We counted well over 1,000 books, sold for about \$7 each.

Limitations include an inability to search the text within the books. Record keeping features include the ability to track the amount of time a child spends with each book, see how many pages they've read, and how many minutes they spent reading each day. Parents can set up individual bookshelves for each of their children and purchase new eBooks. In order to make this product Scholastic Book Club friendly, the system rewards teachers with points. Disclaimer: Warren Buckleitner, CTR's Editor is a paid columnist for a Scholastic Magazine (Parent & Child).

Details: Scholastic, www.scholastic.com. Price: \$free not including books. Ages: 3-12. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, iPad, Android, Kindle. Teaches/Purpose: reading, comprehension, spelling, language. Entry date: 5/12/2012.



Story Toys Jr. Farm 123

4.5 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/farm-123-free-storytoys-jr/id508002368?mt=8>

Featuring a solid design and playful 3D graphics, this is one of a series from Irish-based StoryToys. This particular story mixes farm animals with an all-to-common counting theme. What makes it stand out is the way the 3D graphics are synced with your screen movements, giving it a "book on a stage" effect. When you flip a page, the graphic elements pop up. We liked how there is always something to do on each page. You can herd chickens to hear them counted, or help cats hide from a dog. Each short skits helps tie the counting in the story. In addition, a set of games in the back ask children to wash the animals to earn stars. All in all, this is a good addition to any early childhood app library.

Details: StoryToys, www.storytoys.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 2-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: counting, reading, language. Entry date: 1/31/2013.



StoryBots Tap & Sing

4.8 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tap-sing/id602903380?mt=8>

Video review at <http://youtu.be/yoBO6nfQDXU>.

Well designed, free and responsive, this is a living xylophone that has keys that can teach you songs. Each note on the two octave scale is represented by one of JibJab's StoryBot characters. You can toggle between four voices.

For the price of \$free, you get three songs (Mary Had a Little Lamb, This Old Man and Row Row Row Your Boat). For more interesting songs, you need to subscribe for \$4.99/month -- sold as an in-app sale, a process that is not well designed (if a child knows your password, an accidental subscription could be activated). The social media options, however, are kept behind a firewall. All in all, this is a good app to download -- just be careful.

Tap & Sing is part of the StoryBots family of apps from JibJab. Visit StoryBots.com.

Details: JibJab Media Inc., www.jibjab.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 2-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: music, pitch, note recognition. Entry date: 4/19/2013.



StoryToys Grimm's Snow White

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/grimms-snow-white-3d-interactive/id577460310?mt=8>

The name says it nicely, with StoryToys. Here's another outstanding addition to any children's app library. Available for both Android and Apple mobile devices, the \$2 app features a solid design and playful 3D graphics. This particular story mixes a Snow White and the Seven Dwarves theme with creativity and classification games. There's more breadth of content than previous StoryToys titles we've reviewed. What makes it stand out is the way the 3D graphics are synced with your screen movements, giving it a "book on a stage" effect. When you flip a page, the graphic elements pop up. We liked how there is always something to do on each page. You can help Snow White clean by sorting items, or move around in maze. Each short skit supports the story. All in all, this is a good addition to any early childhood app library.

Details: StoryToys, www.storytoys.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-9. Platform: iPad, Android, Kindle.

Teaches/Purpose: reading, logic, sorting, classification, spatial relations. Entry date: 1/30/2013.



Tale of a Snowflake, The

4.3 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tale-snowflake-water-cycle/id569337179?mt=8#>

This beautifully illustrated eBook introduces children to the concept of the water cycle. In the story, a little girl captures a talking snowflake, who explains how she started as a drop of water in the ocean that evaporated and eventually turned into a snowflake. You can participate in some of the pages, by moving the sun around to cause the water to evaporate or shaking snowflakes from clouds. In addition, fact windows are presented, providing scientifically correct definitions of each key concept.

The big idea? The circulation of water has gone on for billions of years, and it will continue once again. The content make it easy to jump between pages, and teacher options let you adjust the text, music and sound effects; or toggle between English & Persian (Farsi).

Details: AppTalia, www.apptalia.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-10. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch.

Teaches/Purpose: science, reading. Entry date: 4/26/2013.



Toca Band

4.9 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/toca-band/id521640648?mt=8>

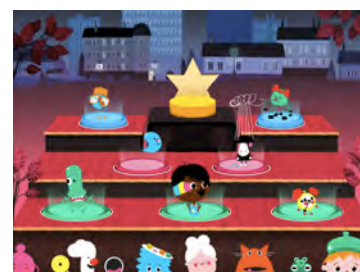
Turn your iPad or iPhone into a playful, powerful musical sandbox with this well designed app. Toca Band (\$2.99 from www.tocaboca.com) is the eighth Toca Boca app we've reviewed, and it is one of the most difficult to stop playing.

You start with an empty stage, with seven spots waiting to be filled. You get your choice of sixteen musicians to mix and match. You discover that some are more rhythmic while others are melodic. In addition, the location on the stage can influence how they sound (the top spots make them more active). A spotlight area lets you further explore the different voices, which can be layered over your current band's loop. On first glance, you might think there may not be much to do with this app, but there's actually a lot to explore, and a lot of opportunities to informally experiment with mathematical and logical relationships.

Our testers wished for some additional features, such as a mute or pause button so that you could silence your band without having to rebuild it from scratch; or perhaps a way to adjust the tempo. Another logical feature would be the ability to record your own sounds, so you can be part of the band (see Smule's MadPad if you're looking for this type of app). But the downside of extra features is complexity, however, and simplicity is one reason Toca Band has such a bright future.

The music in Toca Band comes from the Swedish studio Hakan Libdo Audio Industries. Teachers: It is a blast to plug your iPad into a set of speakers, and have a classroom dance, where different children can take control of different instruments.

Details: Toca Boca, <http://tocaboca.com/>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: music, math, patterns. Entry date: 9/12/2012.



Toca Hair Salon 2

4.8 Stars

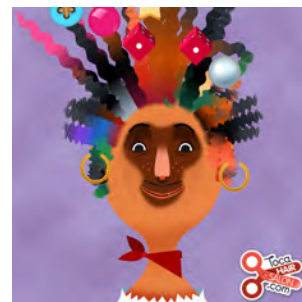
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/toca-hair-salon-2/id569632660?mt=8>

This second edition of Toca Hair Salon is just as zany, with some added frosting that makes it more fun. The app is more similar than different than the first edition, however. The biggest news is that this is the first Toca Boca app to run on the Amazon Kindle Fire HD, the first Toca Boca app to break free of iTunes. We were not able to find the app in Google Play, however.

New tools include a razor, curling iron, crimper and straightener. New accessories include hats and glasses. Additional content includes a wider range of color spray effects, the ability to combine to customize new shades, and new photo backdrops.

As with all Toca Boca digital toys, there are no in-app purchases or third-party ads. This app is definitely more fun than educational; once children get started, it is hard to stop. Children can take photos of their final creations, which end up in your photo library. It's always nice to see a great app get better; such is the case with Toca Hair Salon 2.

Details: Toca Boca, <http://tocaboca.com/>. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, Kindle Fire. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, hair styling. Entry date: 12/7/2012.



Toca Tailor

4.5 Stars

While this app isn't as simple to use as Toca Hair Salon, Toca Tailor manages capture the same irreverent creative flavor, while offering a lot more to do from a creativity angle. This includes designing and styling outfits for four "discerning and quirky characters," choosing patterns, adjusting hemlines or lengthening the sleeves. You can also add signature designer buttons, pockets and other details. You can mix and match pre-set colors, prints and fabrics, or take a photo of a pattern using your camera. Want some denim for a shirt? Use your own jeans. When you're finished, you can take photos of your final design creations and save them in your photo library for sharing. Content includes a small library of hats, shoes, bags and glasses, four characters to dress (both male and female), 24 fabric patterns, 24 different clothing details and 30 accessories like shoes. There is no advertising or in-app purchases. This is one of the few dress up experiences not loaded with gender stereotypes; which is especially noteworthy.

Details: Toca Boca, <http://tocaboca.com/>. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: creativity. Entry date: 10/12/2012.



Toddler Maze 123

4.6 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/toddler-maze-123/id569328780?ls=1&mt=8>

Here's a great starter app for introducing even young children to the mechanics of a multi-touch screen. Content consists of 20 simple mazes, shown in sequence as stops along a road. You can drive an ambulance to the hospital, fly a spaceship to the moon or walk through a sewer system with a friendly alligator. The illustrations, characters and animated objects are well designed and work well with the overall theme. Features include: multiple levels of difficulty; a sound on/off feature; optional hints that can show the track of the path; the ability to change the printed instructions; and a printing feature, so you could play the mazes off-line. One minor gripe -- it would be nice if children could see the trail of their finger. All in all, this is an excellent app for younger children that provides a solid spatial learning experience.

Details: GigggleUp Pty Ltd, www.gigggleup.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, language. Entry date: 11/20/2012.



Trains by Byron Barton

4.8 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/trains-byron-barton/id562376571?mt=8>

Here's another excellent app for very young children, that does an excellent job introducing language and words. The design is similar to Boats, also based on the printed version of the Byron Barton book, and lets children interact with many types of trains and train-related words such as tracks, passengers, and towns.

Unlike most Oceanhouse Media titles, many objects can be moved around the screen, flannel board style. Features include animations and movable objects on every page; picture / word association — words that zoom up and are spoken when pictures are touched; individual words that highlight and are read aloud when tapped; all combined with high quality narration and sounds.

This is a good value app for its target age group. See also Boats by Byron Barton (CTR, August 2012).

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: transportation. Entry date: 11/16/2012.



Trucks by Duck Duck Moose

4.8 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/trucks-hd-by-duck-duck-moose/id522563847?mt=8>

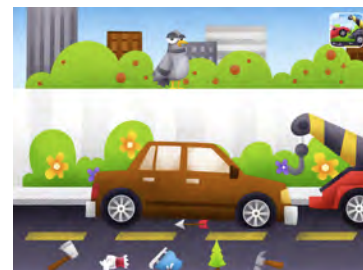
Playful yet powerful, here's another easy, solid app from Duck Duck Moose.

Weaknesses to note include a confusing first screen that shows you a parade of the interesting trucks in the app, but doesn't let you play with them right away, and the choice of a Christmas song (Jingle Bells) which seems strange in July. All the music is excellent. These are minor issues: children quickly learn to follow a large arrow to get to the main menu, and it is easy to mute the music.

The five activities give you plenty to do. You can wash a car after a trip through some mud, sort trash with the recycling truck, make a car have a flat tire by placing items in the road (our favorite), followed by a tow ride to the garage to put on a new tire. All in all, this is another very solid app that children will want return to.

Each activity pulls you into the activity by letting you spray the hose in the car wash, or operate the lift in the garage. The final activity, the Car Parade is interesting -- children use a stop light to adjust the speed of traffic -- a nice prop for bringing up a very important topic (how traffic lights work). All in all, this is another solid app from Duck Duck Moose that nicely capitalizes on a common play pattern.

Details: Duck Duck Moose Design, www.duckduckmoosedesign.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-7. Platform: iPhone, iPad. Teaches/Purpose: vehicles, transportation, recycling, ecology, sorting, science, traffic lights. Entry date: 5/17/2012.



Turn And Learn

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/turn-learn-words-ease!/id548917415?mt=8>

Featuring a clean design and multiple language options, Turn and Learn is a smart flashcard app that makes it easy to practice basic vocabulary words in English, German, French, Italian and Russian.

The screen is set up in a grid, not unlike a game of concentration. You see a picture, hear the pronunciation and read the text, and then touch the photo. The words are separated into thematic units and sets of words of 12 cards. Learning of each category involves 4 stages (5 in English). The design is gimmick free and the challenge increases with your ability. The downside is that you quickly use up all the words in one particular language.

Words are pronounced by native speakers. Content includes 12 topics such as food, clothing, art and nature. The first levels are free; the publisher hopes you'll purchase future levels with more words. Created in Russia by Ivan Oparin. If you want a general introduction to the sound of several languages, this is an excellent app.

Details: Alla Tarasova, www.turnandlearn.me. Price: \$free. Ages: 6-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: foreign language: English, German, French, Italian and Russian Vocabulary. Entry date: 11/6/2012.



VivaKids' ABC

4.4 Stars

When does art and the alphabet collide? Have a look at this app. Featuring beautiful stop-motion animation, this app features 26 letter-themed animated routines.

It is especially designed to introduce children to various art techniques. For example, the letter V is made out of popping popcorn, which morphs into a volcano. After they watch the short video, children can trace the letter, uncovering a variety of interesting textures. There's no shortage of surprises, and it's fun to see the creative types of art projects gradually unfold on the screen. The tracing feels sluggish in some of the letters -- you notice a lag especially if you scribble quickly. It is easy to jump in and out of the letters to a favorite routine, or just explore. Developed by 1K Studios in collaboration with designer Ulrike Kerber.

Details: 1K Studios, www.one-k.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: art, letter recognition, letter formation, upper and lower case, alphabet. Entry date: 10/11/2011.



Voyage of Ulysses, The

4.7 Stars

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-voyage-of-ulysses/id538571921?l=it&ls=1&mt=8>

How do pull kids into Greek Mythology and make it interesting? The Voyage of Ulysses contains 26 screens full of innovative interactive strategies to let you explore each page. The techniques let you drive the action, and do a nice job extending the story. For example, you can touch the city of Troy to set fire to buildings, tilt the screen to steer Ulysses' raft through the ocean, or touch the screen to uncover the next page of text. The traditional index has been replaced by a map. Features include the ability to toggle between Italian or English. This is the second in the "Books to Play" series from Italian-based Elastico (www.elasticoapp.com). The first was Pinocchio.

Details: Elastico Srl, www.elasticoapp.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 5-11. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: mythology. Entry date: 2/18/2013.



War Horse

4.7 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/war-horse-interactive-edition/id557865146?mt=8>

This is a digital edition of Michael Morpurgo's novel, designed to teach children about WWI and encourage them to discover the real stories behind the war's events, places, and participants.

The app features the complete text of the novel, together with an 80 minute, unsynchronized, unabridged reading by the author and a musical performance. Other features include a timeline alongside the book that explores WWI through documents, maps, photographs and film. As with other Touch Press productions, each image is zoomable, and many of the objects can be rotated with a swipe.

The app presents the war from both the Allied and German perspectives, as it does in the novel, and features narrated first-hand quotes and 200+ original photographs. The app also features a selection of video interviews with historians, experts, and the author. Topics covered include horses in war, trench life and the Western Front today, all supported by related images, subtitles, video and rotational photography.

This is a must-download for those with an interest in history. Created in cooperation with Egmont, Illuminations Television and Touch Press.

Details: Touch Press, www.touchpress.com. Price: \$13.99. Ages: 9-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: history, reading, horses, music, Word War I, Germany, England. Entry date: 11/19/2012.



Welcome to the Vampire's Lair...If Your Dare!

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/vampire-kids-story-book-scary/id572764423?ls=1&mt=8>

For the child who desires to be pleasantly spooked, this playful 10 page ebook would be especially good around Halloween, but the content will hold interest any time of the year. Each screen contains narrated text with highlighted words. That, combined with the topic, makes this a good early reading app for a general language experience.

Each page has a skit, including a finger-eating plant, a haunted Mona Lisa jigsaw puzzle, a bug squishing game where you try to kill furry scorpions before they multiply, a piano keyboard made of coffins that scream, and a clever face decorating activity that uses your front-facing camera, and lets you paste weird eyes or fangs onto your face. Features include the ability to record your own narration, and the ability to toggle between English, Spanish and Portuguese. There are no ads.

Details: LivoBooks, www.livobooks.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, language, some creativity and music. Entry date: 1/10/2013.



What Will I Be?

4.4 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/what-will-i-be/id593449762?mt=8>

Wondering what you'll be when you grow up? Now there's an app for that. Featuring clear watercolor illustrations and pleasant British-sounding narration, the 19 page eBook follows a predictable pattern, with about four animated surprises on each screen. There are a lot of typical professions depicted on the pages, including a doctor, teacher, mechanic and sailor. We especially like how you can choose which gender you want featured in the story. The hidden animated features are playful. Children can activate the X-ray machine and see what's inside the dad, make the airplane zoom off the screen, or throw the enormous pie up in the air. A "find the hidden dog" on each page is a fun feature.

In terms of interactive design, this is nothing special. But the story, art and narration is top notch. Engagement is increased because a dog is hidden on each page. See the preview at <http://youtu.be/Rd0Zx-tF5Cs>.

Details: Digital Leaf Limited, <http://www.digitalleaf.co.uk>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch, Android. Teaches/Purpose: reading, careers, social studies, counting. Entry date: 3/19/2013.



Where Do Balloons Go?

4.0 Stars

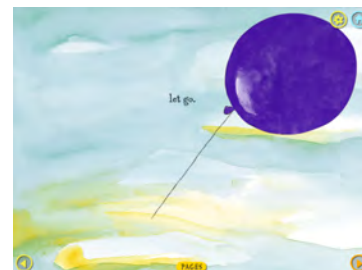
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/where-do-balloons-go-uplifting/id522189097?mt=8>

This innovative, but expensive, eBook + creativity activity explores a question every child has pondered: Where does a balloon go when it escapes into the sky? The 17 screen story is authored and narrated by actress Jamie Lee Curtis, who also provides a video introduction to the concept. The watercolor illustrations are excellent, but some of the pages are cluttered, and your touch doesn't always map well to the action.

Some of the page transitions are noteworthy: a propeller icon lets you steer a small propeller around the screen to uncover sounds, and to blow the balloons around. Most pages scroll from left to right, expanding the illustration, and the play. Features include the ability to toggle on/off the voice over, music, and hints. It is also possible to touch and hear the printed words, after the initial narration has finished, increasing the language learning potential for this app.

A Balloon Theatre lets children create characters out of balloons, and record dialogue to create a play. An embedded sharing link turns this app into a sophisticated email generator, a feature that would be good to be able to deactivate. This app is higher in aesthetics than in interactive power. While the illustrations are well done, some of the ideas in the story seem too cute to be true.

Details: Auryn, Inc., <http://auryn.com/>. Price: \$5.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, creativity. Entry date: 6/19/2012.



Where's My Perry

4.6 Stars

This fun, addicting logic puzzle is based on the "Where's My Water" format. It features first-rate Disney characters and music from Disney's Phineas & Ferb series.

The idea of Where's My Water is simple. You use your fingertip to guide water in its different forms (ice, steam, and liquid) through different levels, to achieve a goal. The game feels a bit like "cut the rope" because you have to plan your tunnels carefully, so enough water is left to reach your goal. This is a great exercise in higher order thinking. In addition, there's a touch of reading comprehension practice, because each puzzle comes with a mini-story that is both narrated and presented in text.

Your initial investment of \$.99 gives you 80 puzzles, and free updates are promised. But there are other in-app hooks in this game. In the story, Agent P becomes stuck in one of his transportation tubes after being summoned to the headquarters of Major Monogram for a mission briefing. Your goal is to lead Agent P back to the OWCA headquarters. Interesting puzzle elements include lasers to help change water to different forms -- a heat-inator to turn water into steam or ice into water, a cool-inator to turn water into ice and the celebrate-inator vacuums up water or steam. The game also features gnomes to collect and bonus levels to unlock.

Monetization. Pay attention to the way this app is monetized. You buy the first level for \$.99, which gives you 80 puzzles. Additional sets of puzzles cost \$.99 each as in-app sales, or you can unlock the full series for \$1.99. So the true cost of this app is \$2.99. There are a lot of padlocks in this game. In addition there are frequent facebook "like" pings.

All in all, this is an excellent quality, but highly commercialized app. As long as you keep an eye on eye on your pocketbook, you'll have a great time, and stretch your brain, too.

Details: Disney Interactive Studios, www.disneyinteractivestudios.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 8-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: logic, memory, strategy, reading. Entry date: 8/22/2012.



Who Stole the Moon

4.4 Stars

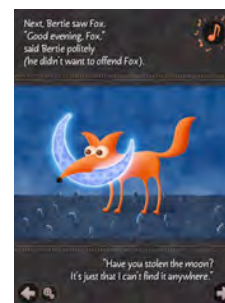
<http://itunes.apple.com/app/id499296025>

This innovative edition of a printed story book (of the same name, by Windy Press; Hellen Stratton-Would, author) isn't perfect, but it contains some interesting interactive techniques that make it worth a look. In addition, the story is easy for a child to relate to, and is beautifully illustrated.

In the story, a boy dreams of being an astronaut, so he watches the moon at night through his skylight. The pages are designed so a child can take part in the story, by moving the skylight view, or by making the moon disappear.

You help Bertie find the moon by visiting with animals, singing songs and playing one of four games. Content includes eight original songs by Susie Tallman and Richard Pleasance; 15 language options (English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Korean, Swedish, Dutch, Russian, Ukrainian, Czech, Turkish, and Afrikaans). Weaknesses include promotional links on the last page, and synthesized music accompaniments. Prices are \$4.99 for iPad, and \$2.99 for iPhone.

Details: Windy Press International Publishing House, LLC, . Price: \$4.99. Ages: 3-9. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: language, reading English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Korean, Swedish, Dutch, Russian, Ukrainian, Czech, Turkish, and Afrikaans. Entry date: 10/4/2012.



Write My Name

4.7 Stars

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/write-my-name-by-injini/id500623496?mt=8>

This clean, teacher friendly app is ideal for helping children learn to write their own letters and words using the correct sequence and strokes by tracing uppercase and lowercase letters.

Features include: meets some of the basic reading and writing Common Core State Standards for kindergarten such as the introduction and mastery of print and word recognition concepts; create 36 custom name tags with your own pictures and recordings to personalize learning for your child; animations upon completion of each letter or word; more than 100 common sight/Dolch words; records student progress as word cards are completed; and a fingerpaint mode that shows completed letters in child's own handwriting. There are no advertisements or in-app purchases

The app features three activity areas to explore: ABC alphabet book focuses on learning and tracing the individual uppercase or lowercase letters; Word cards introduces 100 common sight words where children trace words in uppercase or lowercase letters. Once the word is traced, the word card comes to life with colors and animations. When your child traces the word a second time a star stamp is added to the student's word journal; and My Name allows parents and teachers to create up to 36 custom nametags, including the child's name, with a picture for children to practice writing words or phrases that are especially meaningful for them.

This is one of many apps that could be used for a teaching rotation.

Details: Project Injini, <http://www.injini.net>. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 4-6. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: language, sight words, upper/lower case, writing, letters. Entry date: 3/7/2012.

