

learning links



Helping Kids Learn

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Information Sheet 62

iPad apps for learning

By Samantha Hornery, Manager of Educational Support, Learning Links

The iPad is an educational and life tool that has enormous potential for children with learning disabilities.



Apple's iPad is one of the growing number of touch screen based electronic devices hitting our stores.

With an appearance like laptop computers without a keyboard, the devices offer wonderful opportunities for entertainment and learning and have captured the imaginations of children and adults worldwide.

The iPad can certainly entertain; you can watch movies, read books and magazines, share photos, surf the web, use social media and play games.

However, the iPad is also an educational and life tool that has enormous potential for children with learning disabilities. Whether you are already an owner of an iPad or thinking about buying one, there are some fantastic learning applications (or 'apps') you could consider.

Some apps can help children with learning difficulties remember, plan, and manage assignments, appointments and chores.

Facts about the iPad

- Content is controlled via the iTunes program on your Apple or PC computer, just like an iPod. iTunes is pre-loaded on the iPad, out of the box.
- It can use internet wirelessly or through an internet plan.
- It comes pre-loaded with a range of standard applications such as calendars, contact lists, notes, photos, email, videos, Internet, maps, and music.

What's an App?

App stands for "application" and are mini-programs you download onto the iPad from the iTunes App Store. Some apps are free, while others need to be purchased, costing from \$0.99 per app. New apps are launched daily.

Apps for organising

Some apps can help children with learning difficulties remember, plan, and manage assignments, appointments and chores. In addition to the Calendar and Notes apps pre-loaded on the iPad, there are a range of free and paid apps to help children organise themselves.

Bugme! – a digital Post It Note that can be sent to the home screen as a reminder or emailed with alarm reminders.

Google Calendar – an app that links directly to the Google calendar application available on all computers. This is terrific for PC users who may not be syncing the existing Calendar app to their computer.

Teux Deux – a to-do list app with lists for each day of the week and a special list for 'someday' (jobs we'd all like to get to). Any items not completed on a given day automatically appear on the following day's to-do list.

About us

Learning Links is a charity and non-profit children's learning organisation formed in 1972 by parents and professionals to help children with disabilities and learning support needs.

Our vision is of a community where all children and families have equal access to learning opportunities and quality support.

Our services

Children under 6

- Early childhood intervention for babies, toddlers and preschoolers with a disability or developmental delay.
- Assisting children with disabilities to transition to school.
- Speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy.
- Mobile toy library service.
- An inclusive preschool.
- FREE story time sessions at Fairfield Library.

Children attending school

- Specialist assessments to determine your child's educational needs.
- Reading and maths support for children who are falling behind at school.
- Speech therapy and occupational therapy.
- Social skills and anxiety management groups.
- Transition to school groups.
- Counselling.

Parents, carers and families

- Case management services.
- Support to families who have just received a diagnosis of a disability for their child.
- Programs to help parents support their child's communication.
- A range of programs to develop parenting skills.
- Support groups for carers of children with a disability, developmental delay or chronic medical condition (MyTime).
- FREE program for parents living in Cabramatta on how to tutor children of preschool age (HIPPPY).

Workshops

Learning Links also delivers workshops for parents, carers and professionals working with children on a range of topic areas including ADHD, autism, behaviour, child development, children's learning, children's wellbeing, communication, counselling and fine motor skills.

Learning Links has services in five Sydney locations. We also offer some services to children in country NSW, the ACT, and some programs Australia-wide and in New Zealand. A complete list of locations and contact numbers is on the back page.

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Timer – stopwatch and timers in various formats to help students keep track of time to complete assignments.

Zenbe Lists – after an account is created, multiple to-do lists can be created and managed on this app.

Certain apps allow for fun, interactive and interesting practice of times tables, counting patterns, shape identification and counting money.

Apps for studying

Studying can be a much more dynamic and interactive experience for children with the assistance of the following apps.

Evernote – allows study notes to be created and linked to video files, web pages, images, and audio files. These notes can be synced to a range of computers and other handheld devices for back up and printing.

Flash Cards & Study Aid – apps designed to make preparing flashcards easy and losing flashcards a thing of the past.

Prezi – a presentation app where the traditional right to left reading processes and page flipping is turned on its head. Prezi zooms from one image or text to another, making the revision of study notes a far more exciting and engaging experience.

Brain Trainer – designed for children and adults alike, including a range of activities designed to improve brain processing, this app aids in problem solving, memory, speed, flexibility and attention.

Apps for maths

Success in school maths requires some drill and practice, repetition – and lots of it. Certain apps can take the tedium out of this by allowing for fun, interactive and interesting practice for times tables, counting patterns, shape identification, counting money, telling time and more difficult operations.

Some standouts include:

Addition Under Sea Adventures – children learn to add through 'under the sea' activities and games.

Calculator – regular, jumbo and scientific calculators are available for free and paid downloads.

Jungle Coins – great app for counting Australian coins and calculating change.

Kids Clock – matching game of analog clocks and digital times with the ability to customise levels of difficulty.

Math Minute! – one minute is set on the clock and a quick quiz is available as a warm-up before other maths homework.

MathGirl Addition House and Number Garden – designed specifically to appeal to girls, with the maths being delivered in front of a backdrop of butterflies, flowers and balloons. Girls earn hearts for correct answers and these hearts can buy items to decorate their respective virtual houses or gardens.

Maths Mania – practice of number skills, with three levels using numbers 1-999 and the four operations. The screen layout for Maths Mania is what is most appealing to teenagers as it is handwritten on a notebook page and looks very different from traditional games.

Mental Maths – practice of the four operations using both positive and negative numbers. Excellent for high school students to practise number skills.

There is a novelty aspect to reading on the iPad, many of the books available on them have additional features activated by touching the screen, such as sound, links to additional information and access to a dictionary.

miTables – times tables practice with many options to customise the questions, including the minimum and maximum numbers, number of points to advance to the next table and sound effects.

Pop Maths – a matching game where questions and answers to maths questions are inside balloons and children pop the matching ones. Individual operations or a combination of these, with some possibilities to select numbers. The screen is a bit busier for children who enjoy it and utilises more coordination to select answers.

Apps for reading

The iPad allows books to be read online, textbooks to be stored, and not carried, and magazines to be collected. There is a novelty aspect to reading on the iPad. Many of the books available on them have additional features activated by touching the screen, such as sound, links to additional information and access to a dictionary.

The key apps to download to access books include:

iBooks – the iPad's own book store, similar in concept to iTunes. PDFs can also be shared from your computer and read in iBooks.

Kindle – Amazon's online bookstore with books designed to read on the iPad.

Stanza – a free reading bookstore, with access to a range of children's books.

There is also a range of apps of individual books for children or apps that provide a range of children's storybooks written from an educational perspective.

Bedtime – these coloured picture books are narrated for children to enjoy listening to.

There are many apps designed to improve the eye-hand co-ordination skills of children (and adults!).

Reading A-Z – includes a selection of storybooks with accompanying comprehension questions.

Rumpelstiltskin, Pop Out Peter, Oh, the Places You'll Go, Dragon Book – examples of some phenomenal picture books with amazing graphics and special effects.

Stories2Learn – children can write their own story and add text, media (picture and video) and audio by recording their voice.

Apps for spelling and sounds

There are a growing range of apps to build spelling, phonological awareness and grammar skills. Most of these apps are for smaller words (e.g. cat, ramp) and usually involve placing letter tiles in the correct order or touching sounds in the correct order. There is not a lot of customisation within these apps or ability to extend at this stage. Some of the standouts for younger children are listed below.

Word Magic – the object here is to find missing letters to complete words. There are some options to customise this game and increase the level of difficulty in words.

Same Sound – after a sentence appears on the screen, three homophones are presented and the child drags the correct one to complete the sentence.

Word Sort – children read words moving across the screen and drag them to the correct grammar bucket (e.g., noun, verb). Some lessons introducing these terms are also included.

Sentence Builder and Story Builder – helps children sequence words to create a sentence or story.

Licking Letters – a spelling app where after seeing a word on the screen, children move a frog to catch the letters in order to spell the word again.

Shake-a-Phrase – an app designed to promote vocabulary and storytelling. Some customisation options are available to increase the range of vocabulary or themes included.

Apps for fine motor skills

The touch screen of the iPad means that all actions involve strong eye-hand coordination to touch the correct icon, swipe the screen from left to right and play any of the games. There are many apps designed to improve the eye-hand coordination skills of children (and adults!).

Bubble Pop HD – who doesn't love to pop bubble wrap? Fine motor practice disguised in a game.

PickNStix – pick up sticks in digital form.

Smudge – a drawing tool for budding artists.

The iPad has a keyboard that appears on the screen to type, which promotes the skill of touch-typing.

TypeFast – a typing practice app that doubles as sight word or alphabet practice.

Disclaimer

All of the apps featured in this article were available through iTunes and iPad specifications were current at the time of publication.

There are a growing range of apps to build spelling, phonological awareness and grammar skills.



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