

# The 50 best ‘apps’ for children



## EDUCATION

### **Endless Alphabet (Free + IAP)**

A joyful collection of words, and monsters to explain them. Sorted alphabetically, each word gets children to drag its letters into place, after which they'll see a character animation for its definition. The app includes ads, which you can remove with a single 69p in-app purchase.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Callaway Digital Arts](#)

### **Comics in the Classroom (Free + IAP)**

This is an interesting approach to teaching history to children through digital comics, with topics including Pearl Harbour, Florence Nightingale and Jack the Ripper. Children fill in the speech bubbles to prove their understanding of the subjects. Three comics are included, with additional ones available as 69p in-app purchases.

[iPad](#) by [Comics in the Classroom](#)

### **Hakitzu: Code of the Warrior (Free)**

This entirely-free app wants to teach children to code using the JavaScript language. It's presented as a game where they build robot warriors and use their coding skills to control them in battles against friends, or in the single-player mode while honing their abilities.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Kuato Studios](#)

### **My First 101 Words (£1.49)**

This is another app for teaching toddlers their first words – you can probably guess

how many – but using video rather than just text and narration. Each of the words is demonstrated through video clips starring a boy and girl, with the ability to play and replay each, or shuffle them.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Blueprint.tv](#)

### **Mystery Math Town (£1.49)**

Yes, there's an "s" missing: this is an American app. But my six year-old has taken to it strongly: a game where you explore a series of spooky houses by tapping on stairs, ladders, doors and windows, solving sums before you can go through them using numbers collected along the way. You can tweak the difficulty level and sum-types to suit the age of your child.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Artgig Apps](#)

### **Kids' Vocab – Mindsnacks (Free + IAP)**

Another impressive app to help children build their essential vocabulary: 7-12 year-olds in this case. The app splits the learning into lessons, each with up to 20 words and phrases taught through colourful mini-games. The first lesson is free, with the full 25 unlocked with a single £2.99 in-app purchase.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [MindSnacks](#)

### **Symmetry School: Learning Geometry (£1.99)**

More maths here, focused on geometry. Developed in Ireland, it gets children to drag and drop coloured counters onto a virtual board to form patterns: as much a puzzle game as it is a maths lesson. Its developer is also providing print-outable extra activities, as well as whiteboard versions and the ability for kids to email their results to a teacher.

[iPad](#) by [PixelSoup](#)

### **Kids ABC Trains (£2.56)**

Aimed at pre-school children, this uses trains and railways as a way to teach kids about letters and phonic sounds. They build a railway by learning each letter, before "driving the train" – tracing letter shapes – loading letter-sound boxes onto it, and matching upper and lower case letters to stop the train running away. A neat metaphor for a neat game.

[Android](#) by [Intellijoy](#)

### **Kids Learn Mandarin Beginner (Free + IAP)**

Trying to futureproof your child's career prospects by getting them to learn Chinese? It's more common a parental strategy than you'd think in the Western world. This app aims to help, with more than 200 Mandarin words taught through mini-games, videos and text. It's aimed at 2-8 year-olds. One lesson – Numbers – comes with the initial free download, then the rest can be bought in a Basic Pack for £2.99 or a Full Pack for £5.49.

[iPhone / iPad](#)

### **On Beyond Bugs: All About Insects (£3.99)**

This is one of dozens of official Dr. Seuss book-apps, with an educational focus on teaching children about the world of insects "from butterflies and crickets to fireflies

and honeybees". The Cat In The Hat hosts the action, with all the rhyming silliness you'd expect of a Seussian story.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Oceanhouse Media](#)

### **Kids Learn Spanish with busuu (Free + IAP)**

More kid-linguistics from online community busuu, which offers similar apps for Italian, French and other languages. This is a collection of 150 key Spanish words taught over 30 lessons with mini-games and revision quizzes. There's a clever "language garden" feature to keep track of progress, too. It's aimed at 4-7 year-olds, with packs of lessons available as £1.49 in-app purchases, or the whole thing unlockable for £6.99.

[iPad](#) by [busuu](#)

### **Wildlife Jigsaw Puzzles 123 HD (£1.49 - £1.99)**

Back to animals with this app, which teaches children more than 40 animals' names through jigsaw puzzles, reading their names aloud as it goes. Puzzles can be played as two, four or nine-piece jigsaws to suit different ages, with hints and voice narration to encourage children along the way.

[iPhone](#) / [iPad](#) / [Android](#)

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[iPhone](#) / [iPad](#) / [Android](#)



## STORYTELLING

### **Justin's World: Goldilocks and the Three Bears (£2.99)**

CBeebies star Justin Fletcher (of *Something Special* and *Justin's House* fame) fronts this fairytale app, which turns *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* into a fable about tidying up and being helpful. But in an entertaining way, of course. Light education elements like counting and matching are included, with the big draw being video of Fletcher telling the story, and getting into character as its stars.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Justin's World](#)

### **Little Red Riding Hood by Nosy Crow (£3.99)**

Another fairytale, this time bewitchingly retold through a mixture of animation, interactivity and toothy wolves in flat-caps. This beautifully-crafted adventure gets children to help Little Red Riding Hood take different routes through the forest, with the items she collects influencing how the story ends. Although here's a spoiler: it never ends well for the wolf.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Nosy Crow](#)

### **Me Books (Free + IAP)**

This is a pre-2013 app in the UK, but it's just gone live in the US, making it worth its place in this list. *Me Books* is a store+reader app for digital picture-books, including famous characters like *Peppa Pig* and a host of *Ladybird* classics. Children can turn the pages and listen to voice narration, but the app also lets them record their own dialogue and sound. The app is free, with stories sold as individual in-app purchases for between 69p and £1.99.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Made in Me](#)

### **Kung Fu Robot (Free)**

Aimed at slightly older children, this graphic-novel tale of "the unicycle champion of the 3rd Northern District... the reigning champion of continuous nunchucking" fizzles with character from start to finish. The brainchild of illustrator Jason Bays, it's a madcap tale of a kung fu-kicking robot, with additional soundboard and ninja-whacking mini-game. It's entirely free for now with three chapters, and the promise of more to come.

[iPad](#) by [Kid Rocket](#)

### **Disney Junior Appisodes (Free + IAP)**

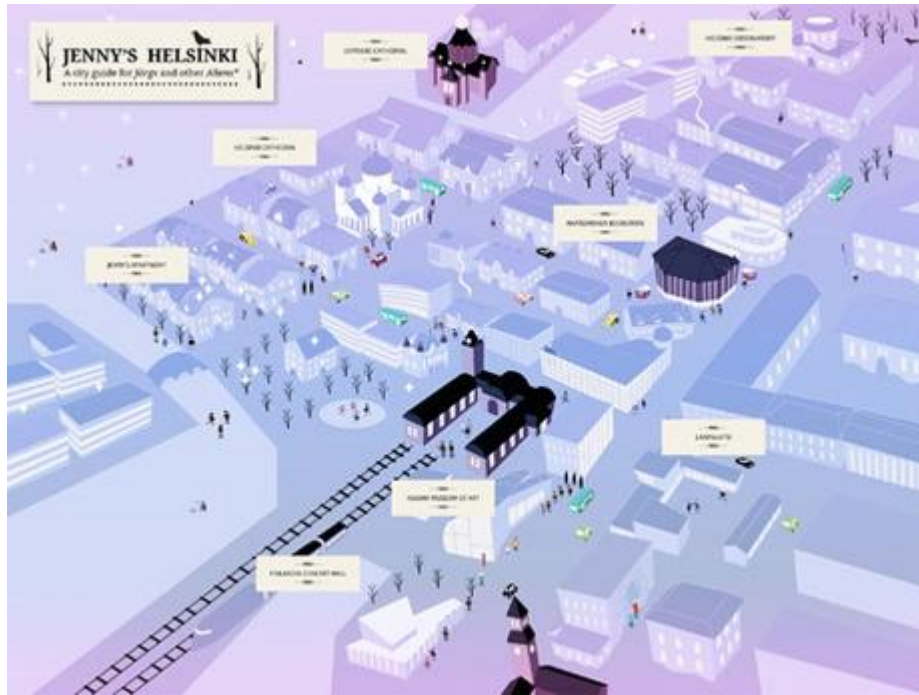
Spun off from the Disney Junior TV channel, this app offers appisodes – definition: "an interactive version of a full-length TV episode" – for shows including Mickey Mouse Clubhouse and Jake and the Never Land Pirates. Each adds mini-games and other interactivity to the original animations. It's free with one appisode, and others available as £2.99 in-app purchases individually.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Disney](#)

### **My Story World (Free + IAP)**

This shares some features with Me Books, in that it's a collection of digital picture-books including some familiar names (Sid the Science Kid, and Little Red Riding Hood for example). Each story includes creative activities like drawing and colouring, with the promise of new stories added to its collection every week. You pay £3.99 via in-app purchase for a six-month subscription, giving access to everything.

[iPad](#) by [Mindshapes](#)



### **Jörgits & the End of Winter (£3.99)**

Jörgits is a storybook app with an environmental message, telling the tale of a group of aliens whose planet is cooling down, and their expedition to "a planet nearby which is rapidly heating up – ours". Its message about global warming is delivered with charm and a light touch, though, as well as plenty of extra animation and interactivity.

[iPad](#) by [Tank & Bear](#)

### **Beauty and the Beast (£2.99)**

Developer StoryToys specialises in turning familiar fairytales into pseudo-3D pop-up book-apps, telling the stories through a mixture of text and animated, interactive scenes that pop up from the virtual pages. There's even a spot of gaming: playing ping-pong against the Beast, and running away from a hungry wolf.

[iPhone / iPad](#) / [Android](#) by [StoryToys](#)

### **Hunches In Bunches (£2.99 - £3.34)**

This is a digital version of a more-traditional Dr. Seuss book: the tale of a young boy getting distracted by all manner of surreal creatures ("a Sour Hunch, a Very Odd Hunch, the Homework Hunch, a Four-Way Hunch, the Nowhere Hunch..." as he tries to figure out how to spend his day. Aimed at 3-6 year-olds, its voice narration and word-highlighting aims to encourage early reading.

[iPhone / iPad](#) / [Android](#)

### **The Phoenix Weekly Story Comic (Free + IAP)**

This is the digital edition of print comic The Phoenix, which comes out once a week with a mixture of stories, puzzles, competitions and other stuff for kids. If you've seen the print version, you'll know that the content is very good. The ability to save favourite pages is useful on iPad too. Subscriptions cost £1.99 a week, £5.99 a month or £32.99 for six months.

[iPad](#) by [The Phoenix Comic](#)



### **Classic Winnie-the-Pooh (Free + IAP)**

This new app stays faithful to the original A.A. Milne Winnie-the-Pooh books, including the famous illustrations by E.H. Shepard. Pooh and his friends have been animated, but the app avoids the everything-including-the-kitchen-sink approach of some appy retellings. Actor Rufus Jones provides voice narration. One story is included for free, with others costing £1.99 each as in-app purchases.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Egmont UK](#)

### **Jackie Junko (£1.49)**

Claiming to be "the first app to push the boat out – quite literally", this is a story about a boat named Jackie who goes on an adventure, meeting animals and other boats as he goes. Aimed at 3-7 year-olds, its illustrations are marvellously-vintage in style, while the interactivity never comes at the expense of the story.

[iPad](#) by [Springy Thingy](#)

### **Pan: The Fearless Beribolt (£2.49)**

A number of interesting children's app-makers are springing up in the US in 2013, with Hullabalu one of the latest. This is its first app starring a panda named Pandora Beribolt, who sets off on an adventure to find her family. High production values, lots of activities and some fun photo silliness make it a treat.

[iPad](#) by [Hullabalu](#)

### **A Cautionary Tail (£2.99)**

This is based on a short film rather than a book: an Australian short that's been taking the world's film festivals by storm in recent months. The story focuses on a girl born with a tail, told through rhyming verse, movie-quality animation and voice narration from one of the film's stars, David Wenham.

[iPad](#) by [Rawr Media](#)

### **A Troop is a Group of Monkeys (£2.49)**

This is great fun: an animated app teaching children the various plural nouns for animals: monkeys, bats, owls, parrots and so on. It's a musical story, too, with a theme song that will be nagging on your internal jukebox for hours after you use the app with your children.

[iPad](#) by [Little Bahalia](#)



## CREATIVE

### **SquiggleFish (£1.49)**

This app is a digital aquarium, but the problem is it's an empty one. That's where your children come in, drawing and colouring in fish with real pencils and pens on real paper, then scanning them in to swim around in the app. The fun comes in seeing how many different fish they can create.

[iPad](#) by [Stripey Design](#)

### **Night Zookeeper Teleporting Torch (£1.99)**

More drawing here, although this time it takes place entirely on the touchscreen. It's set in a zoo full of magical animals, and structured around "drawing missions" – daily challenges that suggest what kids might want to draw. For example, drawing a hareplane – "the fastest animal in the Night Zoo and it transports the animals around".

Drawings are stored on Night Zookeeper's server for safekeeping, and there's an online dashboard for parents and teachers to keep tabs, and set their own missions if they like.

[iPad](#) by [Night Zookeeper](#)

### **Toy Story: Story Theater (£1.99)**

Disney's latest official Toy Story app turns the tables and puts kids in charge of the storytelling. They choose a setting, characters, props and actions to create a tale, while recording their own voice narration to be played back afterwards. Buzz, Woody and Jessie are all present and correct, among other characters.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Disney](#)

### **Drawnimal (£1.49)**

This is an absolutely fab idea, getting children to draw the outer bits of animals (legs, ears, whiskers and so on) around their iPhone or iPad, before the device provides an animated face. There's an animal for every letter of the alphabet, and many of them

will make parents and kids alike laugh out loud.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Lucas Zanotto](#)

### **Great British Chefs Kids (Free)**

This free app wants to get children cooking, with 105 recipes from 21 British chefs, split into categories like snacks, mains, cakes and biscuits, pastry, chocolate and "vegetables & salad" (good luck with that one, most parents!). Step-by-step text, photographs and videos explain everything, and there's a Tesco tie-in to help parents buy the ingredients from their device.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Great British Chefs](#)

### **Toontastic Jr. Shrek (£1.99)**

File this alongside Toy Story: Story Theater, in the way it allows children to make their own stories featuring much-loved film characters. In this case, it's Shrek, Fiona and Donkey from the Shrek films, with 12 scenes, voice recording and the chance to use a "StoryShare" feature to collaborate with family and friends on other devices.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Launchpad Toys](#)

### **Caspar Babypants Music Time (£1.49)**

Chris Ballew made his name in band the Presidents of the United States of America – they did Lump and Peaches, which should give your internal jukebox another jolt. Nowadays he also makes well-crafted music for children, which has now been turned into an app. Kids can play along on virtual instruments, and instead of in-app purchases, the app points parents to [Apple's](#) iTunes Store if they want more music to use.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Catnap Apps](#)



### **Puppet Workshop (£1.99)**

Most kids I know like sock puppets (the original kind, not the review-their-own-books-on-Amazon kind), but Puppet Workshop takes the idea digital. Kids start with a

virtual sock or glove, and decorate it with buttons and other items, before placing it on a background and taking a picture. What I loved most about this app, though, is that it got my children into making real sock and glove puppets: digital play sparking physical play, rather than replacing it.

[iPad](#) by [JumpApp](#)

#### **Mibblio (Free + IAP)**

A number of children's apps are doing fun things with music in 2013, with several represented here. Mibblio is a "musically interactive storybook app" with a selection of stories, each with their own song. Kids can listen to the song while reading its lyrics, or play along by tapping on virtual instruments, from a keyboard to percussion.

Individual songs cost £1.49 each as in-app purchases.

[iPad](#) by [Mibblio](#)

#### **Identikat (£1.99)**

File this alongside Puppet Workshop: it's another app that mirrors creativity in the real world, while trying to spark kids' imaginations to carry on once the iPad is switched off. Here, they're making virtual cats from lifelike materials and household objects – "the things you'd find in grandma's secret drawer".

[iPad](#) by [Ovolab](#)

#### **Freckleface Strawberry: Monster Maker (Free)**

The Freckleface Strawberry books are the work of actor and author Julianne Moore, and have received lots of critical acclaim. This app isn't a straight story, although there is a storytelling element. It gets children to create their own monster from different body parts, with the ability to insert it into photographs of themselves and friends or family members. A creative introduction to the Freckleface series.

[iPad](#) by [Nymbly](#)

#### **Easy Studio – Animate with Shapes (£2.49)**

French studio Les Trois Elles have made a series of polished, characterful children's apps over the last year or two. This is great fun: an app designed to help children start making their own animations, using geometric shapes as the basis for their moving scenes. Two difficulty modes – Easy and Expert – cater for different ages. Its potential is only limited by each child's imagination.

[iPad](#) by [Les Trois Elles](#)

#### **Faces iMake - ABC (£1.49)**

If your children tire of making sock puppets, cats or monsters, how about alphabetical objects? This is an app with 26 collages of household items for children to reassemble. The idea: they learn their letters and spatial skills while feeling pride at putting the various objects together

[iPad](#) by [iImagine Machine](#)



## PLAYFUL

### **Toca Hair Salon 2 (Free - £1.59)**

In truth, you can buy any Toca Boca app and expect marvellousness: the publisher has a well-earned reputation for quality. Toca Hair Salon 2 is its newest app, and a good introduction. It gets kids cutting, colouring, brushing and styling the hair of a collection of quirky characters, with no set goals beyond having creative fun. Note, it's currently free on iOS as a promotion, but may well revert to paid in the next few days.

[iPhone / iPad](#) / [Android](#) by [Toca Boca](#)

### **Sago Mini Forest Flyer (£1.49)**

Sago Sago is actually a subsidiary of Toca Boca, after it bought Canadian developer Zinc Roe earlier in the year. Its apps focus on younger children: toddlers. This is a bright and colourful app based on Robin, a bird who flies through the forest discovering more than 20 characters, locations and items. That means animated scenes, but kids are left to make up their own storyline.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Sago Sago](#)

### **Bloomsbury Pirate Activity (£2.99)**

Book publisher Bloomsbury was behind this digital stickering app, which apes the kind of sticker/activity books you can buy in the real world, but with no chance of the stickers ending up plastered all over the house. Pirates are the theme (although a separate princesses app is also available) with mazes, puzzles and colouring also included.

[iPad](#) by [Bloomsbury Publishing](#)

### **The Letter Monster (£1.99)**

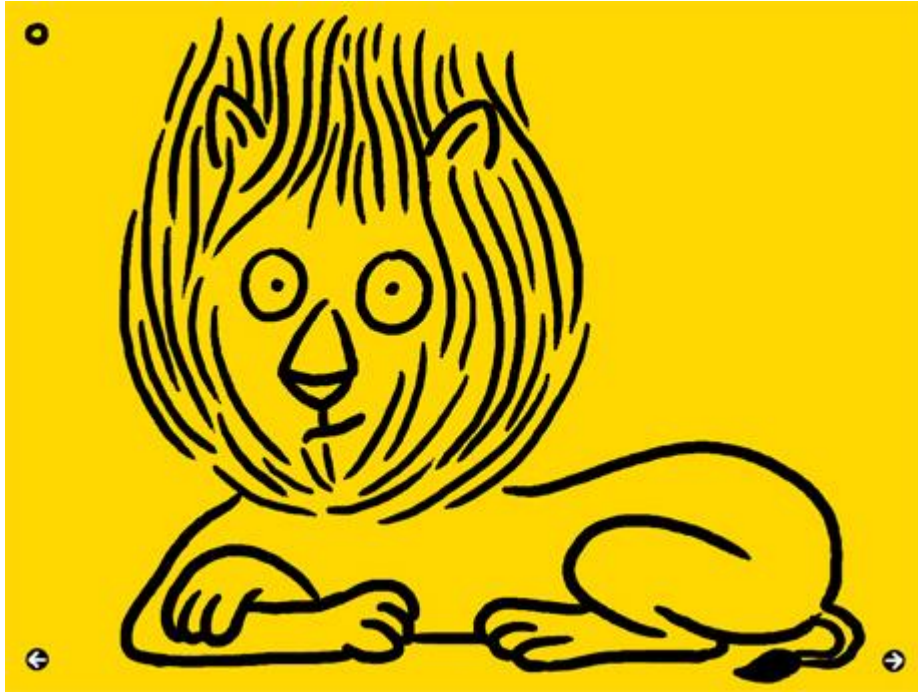
This is a good introduction to the playful apps of Swedish developer Wombi, starring a friendly sea-monster who wants to eat letters. So it's educational as well as fun, as kids drag and drop letters into his gaping maw. A friendly gaping maw...

[iPhone / iPad](#) / [Android](#) by [Wombi](#)

### **Peppa Pig's Holiday (£2.99)**

P2 Games has the official Peppa Pig licence, and has released a series of fun mini-game collections based on her adventures (including a couple of pre-2013 releases on Android). Peppa Pig's Holiday is the latest, and sees the Pig family off on their travels, with games set at the airport, on the beach and in the swimming pool.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [P2 Games](#)



### **Petting Zoo by Christoph Niemann (£0.69)**

One of my favourite apps of the year so far – and in more digital-to-physical fun, it's one of the reasons my sons were so keen to go to a real-world zoo earlier in the year.

It's the work of author and illustrator Niemann: a collection of 21 animals whose animations respond to your swipes up, down and across the screen. Craft and humour in spades.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Christoph Niemann](#)

### **More Trucks by Duck Duck Moose (£1.49)**

If you have a child with a yen for big-wheeled trucks, they'll love this app from well-established developer Duck Duck Moose. It sees them driving four trucks, including a fire engine and crane. In the latter case, they get to build (and then, more importantly, knock down) some structures.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Duck Duck Moose](#)

### **Yummiloo Rainbow Power (£1.49)**

This colourful game revolves around characters called Yum Yums, whose annual carnival has been derailed by a lack of food. That means children get to help the Yum Yums harvest it, with the game aiming to entertainingly introduce ideas about healthy eating as they sort ripe from spoiled foodstuffs.

[iPhone / iPad](#) by [Night & Day Studios](#)

**I Spy With Lola (£0.69 - £1.49)**

Part of a bigger series of Lola Panda games, this sees the heroine travelling the world on an "I Spy adventure", collecting items based on different letters, and unlocking new locations to explore as she goes.

[iPhone](#) / [iPad](#) / [Android](#) by [BeiZ](#)

**Dr Panda's Handyman (£1.49)**

Finally... more pandas! In fact, there are lots of Dr. Panda games to investigate, but this is one of the latest ones. It's based on DIY, with 13 activities in a virtual home: making a bed, tearing up old floors and painting everything.

[iPhone](#) / [iPad](#) / [Android](#) by [TribePlay](#)