




# Suggested Apps and Games For EARLY YEARS




## Learning




### FISH SCHOOL HD

This app teaches young children (age 2-5) about important things like letters, shapes, numbers and more, all set in a colourful underwater setting with adorable sea creatures. The basic idea has fish and sea creatures forming the shapes of letters, numbers etc that your little one can identify. Developers Duck Duck Moose have a lineage of creating family friendly apps and games with 21 top-selling apps since 2008. Fish School HD has over 50,000 downloads and offers a rounded package of activities, but many other apps by this developer are highly rated and offer a few twists on the formula. As always it's worth checking a few out to see which best suits your child's interests. Fish School HD is available for free on iOS and Android.



### GREEN EGGS AND HAM - DR. SEUSS

The classic Dr. Seuss book has been reworked into an interactive adventure for modern day devices, with an emphasis on encouraging literacy learning in younger children. Within the app, there's a few different options on how to enjoy the story; you can read it aloud together, have the app read the book and follow along, or just play the story through automatically. You can even tap on words to hear them individually to practice vocabulary. While the app will set you back £3.79 on Android (£3.99 on iOS) it has an excellent rating and over 10,000 downloads, with many noting how much their young children have enjoyed the story. It speaks volumes about the quality of the work, too, that a book from 1960 can still be read and loved by children some two generations after its initial release.




### TOCA LAB: ELEMENTS

Toca Lab is the app of choice in encouraging little scientists to get to grips with elements, our world and how physics and chemistry work. This one might be a little advanced for younger kids and, though it has a PEGI 3 rating, it does recommend ages 6-8 in the description. All 118 elements are present in Toca Labs and kids are encouraged to find and test them all. Experimenting with things like Gold, Neon, Hydrogen and more, it gives a better grasp of how everything in our universe is formed. Bear in mind though that it's not meant to be a scientifically accurate account of how elements react, but to build curiosity in young minds. The app is available on iOS and Android for £3.99.



### BAREFOOT WORLD ATLAS

What's the next best thing to travelling the world? Well, for kids with access to an iPad or Apple phone, Barefoot World Atlas could be a close second. In this app available only on iOS for £4.99, kids and adults can explore the globe from the comfort of their own homes and learn all about our planet. The app, which is rated 4+, only appears on Apple devices but the sheer amount of information contained in here will keep curious kids busy for hours on end.



### SKETCHBOOK - DRAW AND PAINT (AUTODESK SKETCHBOOK ON IOS)

Encouraging artistic ability at an early age can often be invaluable in letting kid's imaginations loose and there are many apps that allow them to unlock that passion. SketchBook comes highly recommended with over 300,000 reviews. Essentially, the app comprises a blank canvas and a host of "fast and powerful creative sketching tools" like pens, pencils and paint brushes to let those creative juices flow. SketchBook is rated PEGI 3 so even younger children should be able to get to grips with it. However, it could prove a little too complex for some and the large collection of tools and crisp graphics would suit a larger screen like an iPad, over a mobile phone. Despite this, the ability to simply mess around and doodle, coupled with more advanced accessibility later down the line, should make it a must own for all age ranges. The app is free to download on both Android and iOS.

## Just for Fun




### LITTLE FRIENDS: CATS & DOGS

If you're looking to introduce pets into the family home but aren't sure about how your children might react, a good way to get your younger ones acquainted with an animal before a big commitment is a game like Little Friends: Cats & Dogs. This Nintendo Switch game tasks players with feeding, playing with and loving their own virtual cat or dog. Much like Nintendogs or even Tamagotchi of the 90s, Little Friends is a fun way to build up confidence to owning a real animal. While only a 1 player game, Little Friends: Cats & Dogs is suitable for all ages and entirely offline, so there's nothing at all to worry about when they're enjoying it alone.



### YOUTUBE KIDS

YouTube Kids takes the popular YouTube format and curates a more specialised environment for children to search through. While any age range can benefit from YouTube Kids, the 'Preschool' Mode is specifically designed for kids aged 4 and under. According to the app's description, 'Preschool' Mode promotes creativity, playfulness, learning and exploration through its channels. The inclusion of parental controls (limited screen-time, video blocking and flagging) and strict advert monitoring by YouTube means the experience is incredibly safe for younger kids. It should be noted that in the app description, YouTube say that some inappropriate content can slip through the cracks, but they're constantly implementing updates to stop these. A hugely popular app, YouTube Kids is available on iOS and Android with well over 100 million downloads.



### MARIO KART 8 DELUXE

Mario Kart has been a staple of Nintendo consoles since 1992. It has been a favourite of young and old alike for over 20 years and is always an incredibly fun experience. Now exclusively on the Nintendo Switch with Mario Kart 8, the bells and whistles may have changed, but the enjoyable core gameplay and challenge have not. Suitable for all ages, Mario Kart can be played alone, online or at home with up to 4 players on one screen. The ability to take the Switch out with you into the world and play wherever you like is a huge advantage over other games and means you can always be sure of some quick entertainment.



### BBC iPLAYER KIDS

This app is designed for kids and lets them watch all their favourite CBBC and CBeebies shows in one place. The simple presentation is super easy to navigate and the app itself is entirely free on both Android and iOS with no adverts whatsoever. BBC iPlayer Kids can download shows to your device's internal storage allowing you to take all the best bits with you when there's no WiFi and multiple profiles mean everybody gets straight to their favourites with minimal fuss. According to the app description, it will ask for your child's name and age to recommend other programmes it thinks they might like.



### ROCKET LEAGUE

The concept behind Rocket League takes teams of jet-fuelled cars zipping around football-inspired pitches in an attempt to knock a giant, over-sized ball into nets. Rated PEGI 3, the challenge of Rocket League is probably more suited to those 5 and up, but anybody can enjoy the bright colours and fun gameplay. Rocket League is available on Windows PC, Mac, PlayStation, Xbox One and Nintendo Switch at various price points. Be warned though, you can spend money in the game for certain items so be sure you know when your young ones are playing and what they're buying.

### Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.






# Suggested Apps and Games For 7-11 YEARS



## Learning



### MAGIC PIANO BY SMILE

While Magic Piano doesn't strictly teach you how to play the piano, it does teach hand-eye coordination and can help spark creativity in young minds. Users can play along to a variety of popular songs on a range of difficulty levels in an attempt to get through the song with as few mistakes as possible, increasing dexterity and reaction times. Free on iOS & Android, the game does contain some ads and in-app purchases, so be sure to check these out before letting younger players unleash their musical side. Magic Piano is PEGI 3 rated but requires slightly more nimble hands to master so older kids will get the most from this.



### AZOOMEE

Azoomee houses over 1,000 games, videos and activities for kids of all ages to play, have fun and most importantly, develop their key skills in. The app is award winning, BAFTA nominated, supported by the NSPCC (according to the description on their app page) and comes with a suite of parental controls built in. As well as educational games, activities and kid's favourite TV shows, the app also has a built-in chat feature where they can talk to their friends safely. A nice little touch is that if you buy a subscription to Azoomee for unlimited premium content for £4.99 a month, a portion of the money raised goes towards supporting the NSPCC. The app is available on iOS, Android and Amazon.



### POLY BRIDGE

While Poly Bridge could be easily enjoyed solely as a game, it's actually an incredibly clever way to learn critical thinking and engineering skills in a kid friendly way. It's set in a colourful, cartoony world and has extremely simple gameplay. In Poly Bridge, it's your task to get cars, buses, trucks, boats and more safely to their destination by designing bridges that are safe and practical. How those bridges are created is entirely up to you. With over 100 levels, a sandbox mode and almost infinite playability, Poly Bridge is available on PC, Android, iOS and Nintendo Switch at various price points, so be sure to check which is the best option for you.



### CROSSWORD PUZZLES (WUBU APPS LTD)

Crossword puzzles might not immediately seem like a learning game for younger kids, but they're incredibly effective at building strong word skills and problem solving. This one by Wubu Apps Limited is exclusive to iOS and constantly changes its roster of daily crosswords and challenges, although there are a whole bunch of apps available out there which do similar things. The app is rated 4+ but would likely be suited to kids a little older as the crosswords are designed for adults as well. As mentioned, Crossword Puzzles is only available on iOS devices and is free to download but does contain in-app purchases.



### SCRIBBLENAUTS UNLIMITED

Scribblenauts is a game like few others in that it actively encourages children to use their intuition to solve a variety of puzzles. Armed only with their imagination, players must complete levels by conjuring potentially useful items for main character Maxwell to collect the Starites and achieve his goal. The game helps create strong vocabulary and word association to a fun 2D backdrop. While any version of Scribblenauts is good, Unlimited is the most readily available, being released on Wii U, PC, Nintendo 3DS, iOS and Android devices, PS4, Xbox One and Nintendo Switch.

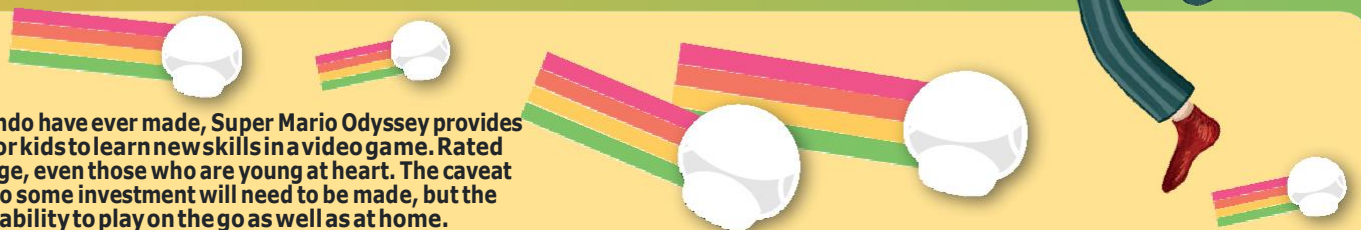


## Just for Fun



### SUPER MARIO ODYSSEY

Widely regarded as one of the greatest games Nintendo have ever made, Super Mario Odyssey provides family friendly fun and a challenging environment for kids to learn new skills in a video game. Rated PEGI 7, Odyssey can be enjoyed by almost any age range, even those who are young at heart. The caveat is that the game is only available on Nintendo Switch, so some investment will need to be made, but the console boasts a host of other child-safe titles and the ability to play on the go as well as at home.



### NETFLIX

As obvious as it may sound, Netflix's children's section is ideal for keeping young ones and toddlers out of trouble on long journeys or at home. The specific profile for kids allows them to only view content appropriate for younger audiences which lets you and them watch their favourite shows and movies anywhere, at any time. Curated playlists, easy navigation through TV series and movies, and no-hassle auto-play means a stress-free guarantee. The only downside to the app is that it requires a Netflix subscription in order to use it but if you're happy to pay the monthly cost, it's an absolute must for any parent.



### MINECRAFT

Minecraft is one of those rare, timeless classics that can be enjoyed by every age group. Coming in both a console version and a pocket edition for mobile devices, the sandbox world-building fun in Minecraft can be an amazing place to let your imagination run wild. The game can be played online with friends and supports cross-play, meaning that no matter what device everybody has, it can be played together. While the game isn't free, it will undoubtedly provide hours and hours of fun for the whole family so it's worth the investment of a one-time purchase. As one of the most popular games ever released, it inspires critical thinking, problem solving and above all, fun.



### LEGO MOVIE MAKER 2

The LEGO Movie Maker 2 app lets users create their own stop-motion movies and upload them for others to watch online. Kids can create a short LEGO movie in whatever genre they like using a range of easy to use tools and are able to add in sounds and visual effects to make the videos look super realistic. All movies are moderated before they make it online so you can be sure no sensitive information is uploaded or viewed by third parties. The app is free to download on both iOS and Android devices but does require creation of a LEGO account to upload videos. The only information needed for an account is the country you live in, your email address and date of birth. While it's rated for 4+, kids of 8 and up will get the most out of this one.



### ADVENTURES OF POCO ECO: LOST SOUNDS

If something more slow-paced and chilled out is on your radar, Adventures of Poco Eco should be able to scratch that itch. With an emphasis on creating a rich and inviting musical soundscape over hard core gameplay, the puzzle action is perfect for unwinding young minds, as opposed to challenging them. The single-player game is available on all iOS and Android devices, as well as the Amazon Kindle Store and you can also nab yourself a free copy of the soundtrack with the purchase.

## Meet our expert

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