TAP, CLICK, READ

How to Find Apps

This is not an exhaustive list. Many other experts are building their own app lists and rubrics. Check with your local media mentor or librarian for more ideas.

Curation Sites	Search By						Rated/ Curated By			
	age bands	core subjects	topics/themes	character strength	skills	keyword	educator	parent	developer	expert
Balefire Labs reviews educational apps with a focus on how well the apps are designed. Users can browse apps by reading and math standards, as well as find apps for students who speak Spanish. balefirelabs.com	🔍	🔍								👤
Children's Technology Review boasts over 11,800 reviews and allows users to filter by quality and search by topic. Each app is reviewed for ease of use and childproofing, as well as values related to education, entertainment, design features, and overall good value. childrenstech.com	🔍	🔍	🔍				👤			👤
Common Sense Media includes user reviews in addition to its educator reviews. Keeping parents in mind, it also looks for positive messages, violence & scariness, sexy stuff, language, consumerism, and drinking. commonsensemedia.org	🔍		🔍	🔍					👤	👤
Digital Storytime has e-book reviews available in seven languages and allows users to search by product price, quality, and size. It also describes apps in terms of the animation, audio, bedtime appropriateness, education, interactivity, originality, rereadability, and extra features. digital-storytime.com	🔍		🔍				👤	👤		
Graphite is designed for teachers and provides information regarding set-up time and resources. Its teacher dashboard provides notes regarding technology, engagement, pedagogy, and support. graphite.org	🔍	🔍			🔍		👤			👤
Know What's Inside features 24 subject filters and allows users to seek apps that don't require wifi, and those that block in-app purchase, ads, and links to social networks. knowwhatsinside.com	🔍	🔍				🔍			👤	
Parent's Choice Foundation considers age-appropriate content, design and function, educational value, and universal human values. Its product finder allows users to search by likes, age, budget, contributor, and company. parents-choice.org	🔍					🔍		👤		👤
Teachers with Apps field-tests every app it reviews with a cross-section of students and teachers. The blog is organized by category and has unique pages for teachers and parents. teacherswithapps.com							👤			

What to Look For in Early Literacy Apps

Phonemic Awareness and "ABC" Apps

1. Are sounds pronounced and represented with letters accurately? Watch out for distorted sounds. When two consonants combine to represent one sound, such as sh, ch, or ng, some apps try to isolate the sounds of the individual letters, sneaking in an extra sound to represent the second letter. Children need to learn that the letter combinations sh, th, wh, ch, and ng make single sounds, which they can recognize in the words they hear every day.

2. Does the app confuse things as it tries to simplify? For example, some apps will try to simplify things by producing only one sound for the letter *a*. This will cause confusion. For example, the letter *a* sound in *at* is not the same as the sound for the *a* in the word *all*.

3. Does the app give children opportunities to hear words and see models of how language is used? Rhyming, for example, is an important early literacy skill, but some apps expect children to demonstrate this skill without first hearing examples of rhyming words. Some apps that claim to teach rhyming have children drag pictures of rhyming words together without allowing them to hear the words pronounced.
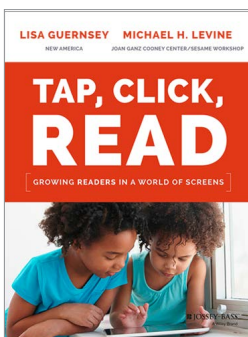
These three tips are excerpted from "[Five Questions Everyone Should Ask Before Choosing Early Literacy Apps](#)," by Barbara Culatta, Kendra Hall-Kenyon, and Gary Bingham, January 7, 2016 on the Joan Ganz Cooney Center blog.

Story Apps

1. Are the story's characters culturally and ethnically diverse and does the story include experiences that reflect today's diverse families?

2. Does the app include accurate information and grammatically-correct content?

3. Does the app include meaningful interactive elements that maintain the story's flow and add to the story instead of being only for interactivity's sake?

4. Are read-to-me and read-to-myself options available, allowing families to read and listen together? (Narration should be well-spoken and expressive.)

5. Does the app's content encourage children and adults (or siblings or peers) to read and talk together about what they are seeing and reading?

These tips are adapted from [Evaluating Apps and New Media for Young Children: A Rubric](#) (2015) by Claudia Haines, a children's librarian and member of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC).

Photo credit: Shutterstock