



A guide for caregivers and teachers on choosing high-quality apps for preschoolers

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General screen use guidelines for children aged 2-5

(based on American Academy of Paediatrics and WHO recommendations)



Limit screen time to no more than **1 hour per day**.



Choose **high-quality, educational, age-appropriate** media.



Use it together with the child and talk about what you see on the screen whenever possible.



Make sure **media don't replace** face-to-face communication, screen-free play, and physical activity.

How to select high quality apps

We've designed an app evaluation tool to help you choose high-quality, educational apps. [1]

Quickly check whether an app supports learning with **the simple checklist below**. Apps with more of these features offer greater educational value.

For the full checklist with scoring, examples from apps, and sample app ratings, scan the QR code, or [read online here](#).



10 key features to look for when choosing educational apps:



Learning goal

Does the app have a clear, focused learning goal targeting early skills?



Solving problems

Does it encourage children to think, reason, or solve problems creatively?



Meaningful learning

Does it teach skills in a way that connects to real-life situations?



Feedback

Does it give clear, specific verbal feedback that helps children learn from mistakes and improve?



Social interaction

Does it include interactive characters that guide and engage children's learning?



Opportunities for exploration

Does it give children chances to explore, choose, and try things out, rather than just follow fixed steps?



Storyline

Does it have a clear story that connects the activities together?



Quality of language

Does it use clear, age-appropriate language that is easy for children to follow?



Adjustable content

Does it adapt to children's level or let you set the difficulty to match their stage?



App design

Is the design simple, consistent, and free from ads or distractions?

What else to keep in mind when choosing apps?

Key takeaways from our studies

1 Choose apps with a clear learning goal (e.g., learning letters, numbers, or shapes). These usually provide stronger educational value than entertainment-only apps, offering better feedback and higher-quality language. [2]

2 Look beyond the 'educational' label - many apps promoted as educational still score low on quality. [2] Use our app evaluation checklist to make sure the app meets as many quality criteria as possible.

3 Select apps that use full sentences, introduce new vocabulary, and include questions, rather than just short phrases. While educational apps do promote new words, they often rely on fragmented speech, with few questions or complex sentences. [3]

4 Use ratings on Common Sense Media or Good App Guide websites just as a starting point. Top-rated apps have higher educational quality than low-rated ones, but they may still lack rich language, social interactions, or engaging storylines. [4]

5 Focus on quality, not price. Top free and paid preschool apps offer similar educational potential. [1]

6 Make it a shared experience. Children learn more when they use media alongside an adult. [5]

Read more in our articles:

1. Kolak, J., Norgate, S. H., Monaghan, P., & Taylor, G. (2021). Developing evaluation tools for assessing the educational potential of apps for preschool children in the UK. *Journal of Children and Media*, 15(3), 410-430.
2. Taylor, G., Kolak, J., Norgate, S. H., & Monaghan, P. (2022). Assessing the educational potential and language content of touchscreen apps for preschool children. *Computers and Education Open*, 3, 100102.
3. Kolak, J., Monaghan, P., & Taylor, G. (2023). Language in educational apps for pre-schoolers. A comparison of grammatical constructions and psycholinguistic features in apps, books and child directed speech. *Journal of Child Language*, 50(4), 895-921.
4. Taylor, G., Kolak, J., Bent, E. M., & Monaghan, P. (2022). Selecting educational apps for preschool children: How useful are website app rating systems?. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 53(5), 1262-1282.
5. Taylor, G., Sala, G., Kolak, J., Gerhardstein, P., & Lingwood, J. (2024). Does adult-child co-use during digital media use improve children's learning aged 0-6 years? A systematic review with meta-analysis. *Educational Research Review*, 44, 100614.

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Scan the QR code or use [this link](#) to share your feedback on this flyer and our app tool.

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