



July 2009

Volume 17, No. 7, Issue 112

Children's TECHNOLOGY Review™

Hannah Montana PSP (Sony), TV Games (Jakks) Harry Potter (EA), Up! (THQ)

All Star Cheer Squad 2
 Back at the Barnyard: Slop Bucket Games
 Cars Race-O-Rama
 Diva Girls: Divas on Ice
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 Vector City Racers
 Wonder Pets!, The: Save the Animals!



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State-of-the-Art Digital People



Sims 3 (Electronic Arts/Maxis) takes people simulations to a new level of detail. See page 14.

This month at www.littleclickers.com and on page 4, what's the difference between a rock and mineral?

Dear Steve Jobs.

Please make an **8½ x 11 iPod Touch**

Each year, as NECC (the National Educational Computing Conference) comes and goes, it is fun to wander the show floor and dream. For example, imagine the implications for classrooms of a legal-pad sized iPod Touch. Lets call it the **iPod Jumbo**.



Children could swipe, stretch and pinch their way down to street level on Google Earth, or tilt the screen back to change the horizon, as they can on the small version. The worksheet sized screen could offer up an endless supply of soft correcting worksheets, synced in real time with the school's server. No more #2 pencils.

The concept of such a device was rumored last year (see <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/09/the-hottest-ticket-in-silicon-valley/?scp=3&sq=mactable&st=cse>) but that was before Apple's 35,000th app.

Steve, we know the Apple board of directors may need to be convinced about the iPod Jumbo project. First of all, consider the competitors. Jeff Bezos has his larger sized-Kindle, plus there are now dozens of Atom-powered net-book choices for tech coordinators on the show floor. Sure, they run Windows, but they're cheap, and some have touch screens. But here's the biggest reason. You could make a fortune. This year 50 million computer-free backpacks will make their way to 97,000 public elementary and secondary schools in the US, and before the school year is out, an estimated \$489 billion will be spent on their largely non-digital, non-connected education (see <http://nces.ed.gov>).

You might be wondering, who would program such a device? That one's easy. The army of iPhone/iPod Touch app programmers could fill up the jumbo-app store, guided by a community of picky raters.

OK, enough dreaming. Here's a list of the top rated titles, from the 41 reviews in this 112th issue of CTR:

- Back at the Barnyard: Slop Bucket Games**, www.thq.com
- Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince**, www.ea.com
- Legendary Starfy**, The, www.nintendo.com
- LEGO Battles**, www.warnerbros.com
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- MySims Racing**, www.ea.com
- Scoops**, www.nimblebit.com
- Sims 3, The**, www.ea.com
- Up!**, www.thq.com

Also, don't miss this issue's LittleClickers column, found at <http://www.littleclickers.com/rocks0709.html>. This one's a gem.

Enjoy the issue.

Warren Buckleitner

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- We don't sell software or profit from products that we review. Review copies of software are donated to Mediatech, a non-profit public technology center.
- We don't distribute/trade or sell subscriber information.
- There is no advertising content.

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE...

As we go to press, we're testing the titles below for next month. Have you used them? We welcome feedback: lisa@childrenssoftware.com

Buzz! Quiz World Conduit, The	Bender Society
Discovery Kids: Smart Animals	Nanovo
Discovery Kids: Smart Animals Eco-Systems	Nitro Web Notebook PSP go
Discovery Kids: Smart Animals Scanopedia	Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time
Disney NetPal Computer EyeClops Night Vision Binoculars	Return to Mysterious Island (iPhone)
FarmVille	Samba De Amigo
Guitar Hero: Smash Hits	Secret Agent Clank
MakeBeliefsComix.com	Star Wars Motion Flight TV Game
Marvel Super Hero Squad	Viva Pinata Pocket Paradise
Matchbox: Rocky the Robotic Truck	Wonder World Amusement Park
My Tiny Planets	YoVille
Nancy Drew: The Mystery of the Clue	Zoo Tycoon 2 DS

An inside view of the Mediatech Foundation, where we test and archive our software. Visit <http://www.mediatech.org> for more information.



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Products are tested and stored for public access and research at the Mediatech Foundation (www.mediatech.org), 118 Main Street, Flemington NJ.

Take our LittleClickers Internet field trip, and learn about:

Rocks and Minerals

Imagine that you're walking along a rocky path in a remote area, and your eye catches a funny looking rock. Would you be able to tell that it was a meteorite worth millions of dollars? Watch this video, at



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZMhTfOBzNY> to learn about a guy who had this experience. When it comes to rocks and minerals, treasures come in many forms. You just need to know what you're looking for.

1. Is there gold in my backyard? Perhaps. But it helps to be in a state like California or Alaska. To check your chances of finding a gold nugget visit <http://www.blackcatmining.com/reference/public-gold-panning.cfm>. Next, have a look at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnkg4b6EIxc> to learn how to pan for gold.



2. What is most expensive rock in the world? Have a look at <http://curator.jsc.nasa.gov/lunar/index.cfm> and you'll learn about a rock that cost over a billion dollars to find. Why? Here's a hint. Look at the URL and you'll see four letters -- NASA.

3. Is there a difference between a rock and a mineral? Yes. At <http://www.fi.edu/fellows/fellow1/oct98/index2.html> you can test your knowledge of rocks, and find out how minerals are indeed very different than rocks. You can also learn about starting a rock collection, including the tools you'll need.

4. What does a diamond cutter do? Consider Antonio Bianco, a real rock star. Mr. Bianco, who unfortunately died, was famous for his work with large diamonds. One was called "the Flame" (see <http://www.safedico.com/expertise/showcase/The-Flame>). You can read about his job, and how he used to sing when he worked at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/28/nyregion/28bianco.html>. If you want to see how diamonds are cut, see this PBS special on diamond cutting <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGsHf25aWam>

5. Can you tell the difference between granite and limestone? Try the matching game at <http://www.learner.org/interactives/rockcycle/types2.html> to see how many types of rocks you can identify.



6. T/F. All rocks sink when placed in water. False. The Wikipedia entry, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pumice> has some good information about a type of rock that floats. That's because of all the tiny air bubbles that were trapped when the rock was formed inside a volcano.



7. What are rock formations? That's when erosion creates natural sculptures. Have a look at <http://www.sciencercay.com/Earth-Sciences/Geology/Worlds-Most-Impressive-Rock-Formations.139316> and see if you can spot the giant mushroom-shaped formation in Kansas. It was formed when the rock near the stem eroded faster than the harder rock on top.

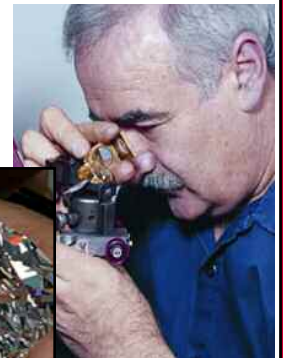
8. I have more questions! You can send a real geologist any question about rocks, at the USGS web site. Here's the address -- Ask-A-Geologist@usgs.gov

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The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), assigns age and content ratings for video games. It offers a free electronic newsletter called ParentTools™. In addition to a list of top-selling games, each issue provides a list of recently rated titles that you can customize by rating and platform. We've highlighted some of the games from the last two issues that we felt you might want to know about. Keep in mind that some games may not yet be released, since they've only just recently received ratings. For each title, you can find the ESRB rating, content descriptors, platform, publisher, and rating summary. For more information visit www.esrb.org.

Selections of the latest E, E10+ and T rated games with ESRB rating, content descriptors and (select) rating summaries.

0D BEAT DROP, EVERYONE -- No Descriptors, Xbox 360, ArcSystemWorks Co., Ltd. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a musical puzzle game in which players line up chains of matching-colored objects while pushing buttons in-time to background music. Objects fall down in sync with the music and matching chains are eliminated with each beat.

50 Classic Games, EVERYONE -- Simulated Gambling, Nintendo DS, Destineer. ESRB Rating Summary: This is collection of 50 card, puzzle, and strategy-themed games. Some of the games include chess, checkers, slide puzzles, matching, and Mahjong. The Blackjack and two poker games allow players to bet chips on their card hands.

Adventures To Go!, EVERYONE 10+ -- Alcohol Reference, Mild Fantasy Violence, Mild Language, Mild Suggestive Themes, Simulated Gambling, PSP, Natsume Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a story-based role-playing game (RPG) in which players control a young man named Finn who uses the services of "Adventures to Go" to build custom-made quests. As players strive to make profits from the adventures they choose, they will occasionally enter turn-based battles against an assortment of animal-like creatures, monsters, and demons. Combat consists of selecting "move," "attack," and "defend" buttons from a menu screen and watching a brief magic spell or sword swipe play out. During the course of the game, players will encounter characters who engage in suggestive dialogue (e.g., "Think of it like two lovers. On their own, they're nothing. But when they meet—oh, the spark!") or use expletives ("...I send you back to Hell!"). The game also features descriptions of items and characters, including a textual reference to "Masters of drunken boxing" and flasks/goblets filled with wine and alcohol. A countryside casino is available for players to bet on hands of poker.

Agatha Christie: Peril at End House, TEEN -- Drug Reference, Mild Language, Mild Violence, PC, DreamCatcher Interactive, Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a seek-and-find mystery game in which players search for specific items/clues on a screen full of jumbled objects. As the famous detective Poirot, players try to solve and prevent murders that occur inside a country estate house. Still panel images convey the story's major points, including the murder of a character. This is depicted by the word bang followed by a still image of the victim lying on the ground. The game includes a depiction of cocaine hidden inside a piece of chocolate and inside a pocket watch. Some dialogue contains the expletives "damned" and "bloody hell."

Aggression: Reign over Europe, TEEN -- Blood, Violence, PC, Playlogic International N.V. ESRB Rating Summary: Players command armies to invade and conquer European countries in this historical (1914 through 1950) real-time strategy game. Viewed from a top-down perspective, the game allows players to control armies, engage in diplomatic and military objectives, and attack other units on a battlefield. Players use rifles, tanks, machine guns and grenades to defeat enemy units (cavalry, tanks, infantry, etc.). The game contains realistic gunfire and explosions, cries of pain, and puffs of red blood that sometimes stain the environment. Some cutscenes include more intense and close-up fire-

fighting, including a depiction of soldiers ambushing a tank with gunfire and grenades.

America's Army 3, TEEN -- Blood, Violence, PC, U.S. Army, ESRB Rating Summary: This is a first-person shooter in which players experience basic combat training in the U.S. Army. The game is designed as an introduction to the Army for young adults who are considering career options. Players handle several realistic weapons, shoot at targets and enemies, and treat an assortment of combat injuries (bleeding, gunshot wounds, collapsed lungs, etc.). While combat scenarios are highly tactical, they can also involve frenetic firefights with realistic gunfire. Enemy soldiers emit brief puffs of blood when hit.

Ancient Secrets, Everyone -- Alcohol Reference, MAC, PC, Encore Software. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a seek-and-find puzzle game in which players find hidden items on a screen full of jumbled objects. An underlying storyline concerns a girl's search for an artifact that belonged to her father. One of the hidden items that players are asked to find is a wine bottle.

Animal Kingdom: Wildlife Expedition, EVERYONE -- Mild Violence, Wii, Natsume Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an adventure game in which players can travel on safaris, take photos of animals, and explore a variety of habitats. Players are directed to take pictures (e.g., a giraffe eating leaves) and are scored based on the quality of the photo. During one sequence, players must use a torch to scare hyenas away from their campsite; the hyenas squeal as they scurry away from the flaming torch.

Battlefield 1943, TEEN -- Violence, PC, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Electronic Arts. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a first-person shooter in which players engage in Pacific Island battles between American and Japanese forces during World War II. Players use a variety of weapons (e.g., machine guns, turrets, sniper rifles, bazookas, etc.) to shoot enemy soldiers that collapse to the ground when defeated. The frenetic combat is highlighted by realistic gunfire, explosions, and cries of pain as soldiers are shot and killed. Players also have the ability to drive tanks over enemy soldiers, pilot planes to engage in aerial dogfights, and detonate explosives throughout the island.

Big League Sports Summer, EVERYONE -- Comic Mischievous, Wii, Activision-Blizzard. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a collection of mini-games in which players can engage in several sports-themed events in order to improve their overall skills. Events include football passing and obstacle course running, volleyball drills, tennis-themed pinball, and "golf darts." During a golfing mini-game, players can aim a cursor to hit seagulls, crabs, and gophers, causing them to spin around and disappear.

BIT.TRIP CORE, EVERYONE -- No Descriptors, Wii, Aksys Games Localization, Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a rhythm game in which players use a laser beam to hit balls and other objects in time to music. Players can change the rhythm and tone of the music based on the pattern of objects hit.

Boulder Dash, EVERYONE -- No Descriptors, Wii, Commodore Gaming. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a puzzle game in which players navigate through caves to collect jewels within a time limit. Players must dig their way through the caves, avoid falling bould-

ers, and arrange a path to reach the end of each stage.

Brain Game Brain Puzzles 2, EVERYONE -- Mild Language, PC, On Hand Software.

BUBBLE BOBBLE Neo!, EVERYONE -- Comic Mischievous, Xbox 360, TAITO Corporation. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an arcade-style adventure game in which players guide a character through colorful mazes, blow bubbles, and shoot them at colorful little creatures (e.g., wind-up toys, dragons, etc.). Players can also shoot tiny lightning bolts at larger boss characters to progress to the next level.

Build'nRace, EVERYONE -- Alcohol Reference, PC, Wii, Zoo Games, Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a racing simulation game in which players can customize and race cars through industrial, urban, and countryside tracks. Cars zoom across roads, navigate sharp turns, and jump over ramps to get through each course. Some billboards on the racetracks display the words Wine and Liquor.

Building & Co, EVERYONE -- No Descriptors, PC, Playlogic International N.V. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a simulation game in which players direct and oversee construction projects in a city environment. Players can hire workers, arrange deliveries, and maintain production schedules in order to gain points and successfully complete the project.

Buku Sudoku Mahjongg Kakuro, EVERYONE -- No Descriptors, PC, Topics Entertainment.

Bust-A-Move Plus!, EVERYONE -- No Descriptors, Wii, Square Enix, Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a puzzle game in which players must line up a device and shoot out bubbles in an attempt to match three or more same-colored bubbles. Players' goal is to clear the entire play area by bursting these matching bubble groups.

Buzz!(TM) Jr. Robo Jam, EVERYONE -- Comic Mischievous, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a collection of mini-games in which players select a robot and engage in activities such as racing, pillow fighting, and spotting the difference between dressed-up robots. In one mini-game, players guide their robots across a platform as a trailing laser beam zaps slow runners, resulting in a charring effect.

Cave Story, EVERYONE 10+ -- Mild Cartoon Violence, Mild Language, Wii, Nicalis. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an action adventure game in which players assume the role of a tiny boy who traverses through caverns to save rabbit-like creatures called "Mimigas." Players run and jump across platforms, avoid hazards and obstacles, and shoot at "cartoony" creatures (e.g., giant mushrooms, square elephants, bats) along the way. Enemy creatures disappear in a puff of smoke when defeated. Dialogue contains some aggressive language (e.g., "Now kill me! Or I-shall kill You!" and "Please kill my master.") and a derogatory remark (e.g., "Dr. Dumb can go screw himself.")

Card Games Collection, TEEN -- Simulated Gambling, PC, On Hand Software. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a collection of card games that includes Brain Games Solitaire, Best of Card Games, Texas Hold 'Em, and Best of Poker. The Black Jack and Poker games allow players to place bets on their playing hands. Players are able to wager chips and access a "hint feature" that offers suggestions on how to play various hands.



ParentTools™ is a free biweekly newsletter from the ESRB which provides a customized list of recently rated video game titles. Sign-up at: www.esrb.org/parentools

What Are People Buying?
Top Selling Games for May 2009

- 1. UFC 2009: Undisputed**, Platform: Xbox 360, TEEN -- *Alcohol Reference, Blood, Language, Mild Suggestive Themes, Violence*
- 2. Wii Fit**, Platform: Nintendo Wii, EVERYONE -- *Comic Mischievous*
- 3. EA Sports Active**, Platform: Nintendo Wii, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*
- 4. UFC 2009: Undisputed**, Platform: Playstation 3, TEEN -- *Alcohol Reference, Blood, Language, Mild Suggestive Themes, Violence*
- 5. Infamous**, Platform: Playstation 3, TEEN -- *Blood, Drug Reference, Language, Mild Suggestive Themes, Violence*
- 6. Pokemon Platinum Version**, Platform: Nintendo DS, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*
- 7. Mario Kart**, Platform: Nintendo Wii, EVERYONE -- *Comic Mischievous*
- 8. Punch-Out!!**, Platform: Nintendo Wii, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Cartoon Violence, Comic Mischievous*
- 9. X-Men Origins: Wolverine Uncaged Edition**, Platform: Xbox 360, MATURE -- *Blood and Gore, Intense Violence, Language*
- 10. Wii Play w/ Remote**, Platform: Nintendo Wii, EVERYONE -- *Mild Cartoon Violence*

*Includes Collector's, Limited, Legendary and Bundles (Guitars) Editions
Source: The NPD Group Inc./Retail Tracking

	EARLY CHILDHOOD Titles rated EC (Early Childhood) have content that may be suitable for ages 3 and older. Contains no material that parents would find inappropriate.
	EVERYONE Titles rated E (Everyone) have content that may be suitable for ages 6 and older. Titles in this category may contain minimal cartoon, fantasy or mild violence and/or infrequent use of mild language.
	EVERYONE 10+ Titles rated E10+ (Everyone 10 and older) have content that may be suitable for ages 10 and older. Titles in this category may contain more cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, mild language and/or minimal suggestive themes.
	TEEN Titles rated T (Teen) have content that may be suitable for ages 13 and older. Titles in this category may contain violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, minimal blood, simulated gambling, and/or infrequent use of strong language.

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- Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs**, EVERYONE -- *Mild Cartoon Violence*, Nintendo DS, Ubisoft. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an action adventure game in which players follow the story of a scientist whose food experiments go terribly wrong. Players help the scientist to dispose of living food creatures such as broccoli heads, gummy bears, and ice cream men throughout the city. Forks, knives, and chili guns can be used to attack the creatures, resulting in a "squishing" sound as they fade away.
- Contra Legacy of War**, TEEN -- *Violence*, PSP, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.
- Copter Crisis**, EVERYONE -- *Mild Violence*, Wii, Digital Leisure Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an action game in which players pilot a helicopter to rescue lost hikers, deliver supplies, and complete archaeological missions. Players must navigate the copter through a series of mean-dering canyons and valleys while avoiding occasional turret fire. If players are hit by the turrets or they crash into a canyon, the helicopter plunges to the ground as the pilot parachutes to safety.
- Crazy Chicken Tales**, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Animated Blood, Cartoon Violence*, Wii, Conspiracy Entertainment Corporation. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an action game in which players guide a chicken through platform environments to reach a forbidden castle. Players run and jump through "cartoony" 3D landscapes, ride piggyback on other characters, and fight an assortment of owls, snakes, hedgehogs, alligators, and wolves along the way. Players can use either a wooden mallet or a pumpkin gun to defeat enemies. The gun makes realistic firing sounds as it rapidly releases pumpkin seeds at owls and snakes. Some enemies disappear in a burst of feathers or emit puffs of green mist when hit by the seeds.
- Daisy Fuentes Pilates**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, Wii, SEGA. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a fitness game in which players can perform a variety of Pilates exercises, create workout routines, and monitor their progress. Daisy Fuentes appears in tutorial videos and narration to guide players through each exercise.
- Dead in the Water**, EVERYONE -- *Violence*, PSP, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.
- Diner Dash**, EVERYONE -- *Alcohol Reference*, MAC, PC, Encore Software.
- Diner Dash 2: Restaurant Rescue**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, MAC, PC, Encore Software.
- Diner Dash: Flo on the Go**, EVERYONE -- *Use of Alcohol*, MAC, PC, Encore Software.
- Dino Pets**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, Nintendo DS, Destineer. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a pet simulation game in which players can feed, play with, and care for baby dinosaurs. Players can train the dinosaurs to perform tricks and enter them into beauty contests.
- Doctor Fizzwhizzle's Animal Rescue**, EVERYONE -- *Comic Mischief*, Wii, Conspiracy Entertainment Corporation. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a puzzle game in which players bounce a bubble across the screen to break boxes, collect power-ups, and rescue animals. Players can hit small "cartoony" aliens and UFOs with lasers or bubbles, causing them to get stunned.
- Domino Rally**, EVERYONE -- *Comic Mischief*, Wii, UFO Interactive Games. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an action game in which players assume the role of a super hero named Mr. Domino who helps townspeople with tasks and chores. Players run on top of dominos and domino-shaped objects (e.g., humans, animals, and buildings) to reach goals and complete tasks. As the human and animal-shaped dominos are knocked over, they collapse to the ground as "dizzy stars" appear over their heads.
- Family Slot Car Racing**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, Wii, Aksys Games Localization, Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a slot car racing game in which players select a family member (Billy, Sarah, Mommy, Daddy) to race small toy cars around a variety of tracks. Players can accelerate their cars, navigate sharp turns, and use "turbo" boosts to gain extra speed.
- Fight Night Round 4**, TEEN -- *Mild Blood, Mild Lyrics, Mild Suggestive Themes*, Violence, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Electronic Arts. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a boxing simulation game in which players can fight boxers from the past and present in regulation-style matches. Players follow the standard rules of boxing as they hit opponents with a series of head and upper-body shots. As with real-life boxing, the game includes constant punches that are thrown to score points. However, knockout punches are replayed in slow motion with crunching sound effects, rippling of the face, and spurts of blood. Ring card girls are depicted in tight clothing or bikinis, and the camera occasionally lingers on their chests or behinds. Catcall whistles can also be heard as the women walk around the ring. Some song lyrics contain references to drugs (e.g., "the pre-crack era") and violence (e.g., "My closest homies each, got popped up and shot up").
- Ford Racing**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, PSP, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.
- Garfield Gets Real**, EVERYONE -- *Comic Mischief*, Nintendo DS, Zoo Games, Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: Players control Garfield the cat as he performs various stunts and activities for a "day in the life" movie. Players dance, run, and jump over platforms, and occasionally get hit by flying shoes for singing poorly on a fence. Eating eggs, toast, and hot dogs sometimes causes Garfield to burp loudly.
- GI JOE: The Rise of Cobra**, TEEN -- *Fantasy Violence*, PlayStation 2, PSP, Xbox 360, Wii, PlayStation 3, Electronic Arts. ESRB Rating Summary: Players battle enemy soldiers and robots in this third-person shooter based on the GI JOE franchise. Combat is constant and frenetic as players use laser guns, tanks, and grenade launchers to shoot at enemies and progress through the game. All laser fire is represented by large, colored pellets or beams of colored light, making the realistic combat appear more fantastical. However, the frequent explosions, cries of pain, and persistent sounds of laser fire add to the intensity of the violence.
- Go Play City Sports**, EVERYONE -- *Comic Mischief*, Wii, Majesco Entertainment. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a sports game in which players run around city streets to compete in mini-games such as rooftop hockey, stickball, kickball, and handball. In the hockey mini-game, players can body check other opponents, resulting in a "punching" sound effect and "dizzy stars" that appear over their heads.
- Guitar Hero Van Halen**, TEEN -- *Mild Lyrics, Mild Suggestive Themes*, PlayStation 2, Wii, Activision-Bizzard. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a music and rhythm simulation game featuring the rock band Van Halen. Players can perform songs using on-screen avatars with various instruments. Players simulate playing guitar, bass, or drums and are scored based on the accuracy of notes hit. Some of the women in the music videos wear low-cut and revealing outfits, while tattoo designs on avatars depict women in provocative poses and clothing (e.g., a fantastical succubus with cleavage and panties). Some song lyrics contain indirect references to drug use (e.g., "Oh this dope nose," "It was rose, I was taking sips of it through the nose," and "Set another line like a coda with a curse."). The expletives "a*s" and "hell" can be heard in a few songs as well.
- HB Arcade Cards**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, Wii, HB Studios. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a collection of card games including Solitaire, Canasta, Hearts, Rummy, Cribbage, and Euchre. Each game features a detailed tutorial that demonstrates basic rules and strategies.
- High School Dreams: Best Friends Forever**, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Comic Mischief, Suggestive Themes*, PC, Eidos Interactive. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a role-playing game (RPG) in which players assume the role of a high school student who attempts to make friends, date boys, and attend the school prom. Players begin the game by customizing a female character's face, hair, and clothes. A loading screen sometimes offers the advice that "Boys will like you more if you wear clothes they like." Players frequently interact with friends and flirt with boys by selecting dialogue choices in the game's conversational system. Players and peers sometimes make suggestive comments such as "Maybe they're staring because you're so cute," "Just shut up and kiss me," and "Girl, you look hot." Some scenes depict schoolmates playing pranks on each other (e.g., rigging water fountains to burst) or colliding with characters on an ice rink. During one extended sequence, a boy stands outside a restroom wearing boxer shorts as the player character comments, "Your basketball shorts smell pretty bad."
- Hunting Unlimited 2010**, TEEN -- *Blood, Violence*, PC, ValuSoft Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a first-person hunting simulator in which players track and shoot animals such as deer, moose, and bear in their natural habitats. Hunters are rewarded for each animal they kill. Hunters are also scored based on the lethality and placement of shots. Blood appears as bullets make impact with the target, and some blood is shown on the ground near the bodies of the animals. Slow-motion camera effects depict a tracking view of the bullet toward the target, adding intensity to the game. Players can also fall off, flip over, and collide with animals on a four-wheeled vehicle.
- IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey**, TEEN -- *Mild Language, Violence*, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, 505 Games. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a flight combat simulation game in which players pilot Royal Airforce planes and complete various military missions. Players fly through the air and destroy German planes, flak guns, and buildings while avoiding incoming gunfire. Players can enter dogfights that involve heavy machine gun fire, bombing, and defensive and offensive attack maneuvers. Black-and-white archival footage from WWII depicts vehicles being shot at or hit with artillery fire or bombs. Some of the dialogue contains mild expletives (e.g., "damn" and "hell").
- IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey**, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Violence*, Nintendo DS, 505 Games. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a flight combat simulation game in which players pilot Royal Airforce planes and complete various military missions. Players perform training exercises, fly through the air and destroy German planes, and occasionally drop bombs on enemy stockpiles. Defeated planes usually explode in a fiery burst with a plume of black smoke.
- Incoming!**, EVERYONE -- *Mild Cartoon Violence*, Wii, JV Games Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an action game in which players use small tank characters to battle against opponents. Players lob cannonballs and missiles at enemy tanks that react to damage by shutting their eyes and whimpering. Some of the "cartoony" projectiles make whistling sounds or explode during battle.
- Jessica's Cupcake Café**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, MAC, PC, ValuSoft Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a strategy game in which players make and sell cupcakes to customers in a bakery. Players must manage their time efficiently and keep customers happy when taking orders, baking and icing, and delivering the cupcakes.
- Knights in the Nightmare**, TEEN -- *Alcohol and Tobacco Reference, Mild Fantasy Violence, Mild Language, Suggestive Themes*, Nintendo DS, Atlas USA, Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a strategy role-playing game (RPG) in which players attempt to rebuild a ruined world by battling various kinds of fantastical creatures. Players encounter small demons, witches/sorcerers, dragons, giant spiders, and gremlins on a grid-like map and must kill them in order to progress. Combat is turn-based as players issue commands to their knights who each have a unique set of magical powers. A few humanoid characters (e.g., monsters, angels, and sprite-like creatures) are depicted in still images with armor, wings, or hair that barely covers their breasts. Some dialogue that appears on screen contains suggestive references (e.g., "You were nothing but the king's whore, you wench") as well as expletives (e.g., "a*s" and "bastard"). Characters occasionally discuss alcohol and tobacco in positive terms (e.g., "The aroma of a mature wine is... enticing" and "There's nothing like a good smoke after a mission").
- Knock 'Em Down: Worlds Fair**, EVERYONE -- *Mild Cartoon Violence*, Nintendo DS, Guidance Interactive Healthcare. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an adventure role-playing game (RPG) in which players traverse through a large fair-ground while battling enemies and engaging in mini-games. Mini-games include fishing, mazes, and hitting targets. During turn-based battles, players can attack clowns, stuffed mini-dragons, and toy ninjas and soldiers. Clashing sound effects and flashes of color indicate damage.
- Madden NFL 10**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, Wii, PlayStation 2, PSP, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Electronic Arts. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a realistic football simulation game, where players can select teams from NFL rosters, create and run plays, arrange playbooks, improve skills, and create/manage a franchise. Football games are presented with extensive player statistics and commentary from professional broadcasters.
- Microsoft Blackboard**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, PC, Microsoft. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a puzzle game in which players arrange objects on a chalkboard to create a balloon-propelling machine. Players must navigate the balloons to hit light bulbs that appear on the chalkboard.
- Microsoft Garden Pond**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, PC, Microsoft. ESRB Rating Summary: Players gently guide origami boats across a pond in this peaceful game set in Japanese water gardens. Players make ripples in the water to maneuver the origami creations or direct them through a challenging obstacle course.
- Microsoft Rebound**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, PC, Microsoft. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an air hockey game in which players bounce balls across an electronic game board to score points in an opponent's goal. Players can select board design, time limit, and target score for each round.
- Might and Magic Clash Of Heroes**, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Mild Fantasy Violence, Mild Language, Mild Suggestive Themes*, Nintendo DS, Ubisoft. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a puzzle/adventure game in which players assume the role of heroes who must stop an evil sorcerer's attempt to rule the magical world of Ashan. Players battle enemy forces in turn-based puzzle games. This entails matching units (e.g., archers, swordsmen, griffins, zombies, etc.) into group s of three or more to perform attacks, cast magic spells, and create defensive walls. Text-based storylines sometimes contain references to killings and murder (e.g., "His crimes include kidnapping and murder" and "I slaughtered your enemies like dogs"). The game also includes some suggestive dialogue (e.g., "you're darn pretty for a succubus") and still images of female characters wearing slightly revealing clothing (e.g., shirts that reveal cleavage and short shorts). The expletive "damnable" can be heard on one occasion.
- Military Madness**, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Mild Fantasy Violence*, Xbox 360, Wii, PlayStation 3, Hudson Entertainment Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a strategy game where the majority of action takes place on a hexagonal grid overlaying the moon. Players deploy futuristic soldiers, tanks, and air forces across the Moon grid and wait for a turn-based "attack animation." The overhead view then switches to a zoomed-in perspective of ground forces shooting rockets, guns, or lasers at the opposing force. When struck, enemies flash in a yellow light burst and fall to the ground.
- Mini-Golf: King of Clubs**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, Wii, Crave Entertainment.
- Mobile Light Force**, EVERYONE -- *Violence*, PSP, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.
- MotoGP 07**, EVERYONE -- *Mild Violence*, PlayStation 2, CAPCOM.
- My Hero: Firefighter**, EVERYONE -- *Mild Violence*, Nintendo DS, Majesco Entertainment. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a simulation game in which players assume the role of firefighters responding to rescue calls. Players earn badges, certificates, and upgrades for any number of tasks, including following proper safety procedures (e.g., handling gas masks, matches, water hoses) and saving lives. Story elements are displayed in comic book panels, and they sometimes depict fiery explosions or people trapped in a burning house.
- MYST**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, PSP, Hoplite Research LLC.
- Mysterious City: Cairo**, EVERYONE -- *Tobacco Reference*, MAC, PC, iWin, Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a seek-and-find puzzle game in which players search for hidden items on a screen full of jumbled objects. Players follow the story of a student who must track down lost artifacts in Egypt. In one scene, there is a depiction of a large cigar hanging from a building.
- Mystery Quest: Secret Island**, EVERYONE -- *Alcohol Reference*, PC, Mumbo Jumbo.
- Nancy Drew: Message in a Haunted Mansion**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, PC, Mumbo Jumbo.
- Nancy Drew: Ransom of the Seven Ships**, EVERYONE -- *Mild Violence*, PC, Her Interactive. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an action adventure game in which players assume the role of Nancy Drew as she investigates a kidnapping and looks for treasure on a small island. Players search for clues and interview suspects to track down the kidnapper and save the victim. Some scenes involve violent situations such as being stung by a jellyfish, drowning in the ocean, or being caught in a collapsing cave.
- Nancy Drew: The Haunted Carousel**, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, PC, Mumbo Jumbo.
- Nutrition Matters**, EVERYONE -- *Alcohol Reference*, Wii,

Nintendo DS, 505 Games. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a nutrition/fitness guide that helps users track their daily caloric intake and activities. Players can construct a meal and determine the nutritional value of food and beverages they consume. Beer, wine, and liquor are among the many listed items.

Personal Trainer: Walking, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, Nintendo DS, Nintendo. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a fitness game in which players can keep track of personal walking statistics with a built-in pedometer. Players can also engage in several fitness-related mini-games, including generating electricity with a treadmill, drawing exercises, and trivia-oriented guessing games.

Petz Hamsterz Bunch, EVERYONE -- *Crude Humor*, PSP, Ubisoft. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a pet simulation game in which players can feed, play with, and care for hamsters. Players can direct their hamsters to run on a hamster wheel, drink water, or go to the bathroom. As hamsters roam around their cages, they sometimes make comments such as "I've pooped myself" and "I've got a brick in my belly. Squeeze! Squeeze!"

Plan It Green, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, MAC, PC, Masque Publishing. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a strategy/simulation game in which players revamp a city from the ground up in order to make it environmentally friendly. Players can construct eco-friendly buildings, modify the energy/waste outputs of the city, and demolish older buildings to recycle materials.

Polar Gopher, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, PC, Mumbo Jumbo.

Raiden IV, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Mild Fantasy Violence, Mild Suggestive Themes*, Xbox 360, UFO Interactive Games. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an arcade-style shooter game in which players control a small plane that constantly shoots at swarms of flying robots, enemy air craft, giant robot bosses, and an assortment of ground targets. Players navigate their plane through jungles and urban environments as the screen scrolls down to reveal new targets and enemies. When players fire lasers, rockets, and missiles at the enemies, they explode in a small fiery burst. During one stage, players can select a female fairy instead of a plane. The fairy appears to be naked, but her long hair covers her chest and lower regions.

RAINBOW ISLANDS: TOWERING ADVENTURE!, EVERYONE -- *Comic Mischief*, Xbox 360, TAITO Corporation, Wii, Square Enix, Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a platformer game in which players control a boy who scales a magical tower that grants wishes to those who reach the top. Players create stepping-stones out of rainbows to climb up the tower. Players can also use the rainbows to attack enemy creatures (e.g., bees, caterpillars, machines, and giant robots) that usually disappear in a puff of smoke and turn into jewels when defeated.

Rockin' Pretty, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, Nintendo DS, Aksys Games Localization, Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a music and rhythm simulation game in which players follow the story of an aspiring pop band called "Starlight." Players earn stars (points) by playing various instruments (guitar, keyboard, drums) on stage.

Rubik's Puzzle Galaxy - Rush, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, Wii, The Game Factory Aps. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a collection of puzzle games inspired by the Rubik's Cube. In addition to arranging colored cubes into various patterns and arrangements, players can also guide cubes from one end of a game board to the other.

Shatter, EVERYONE -- *Mild Fantasy Violence*, PlayStation 3, Sidhe Interactive. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an action/puzzle game in which players bounce small balls at arrangements of colored bricks to clear a game board. During some levels, players must hit the balls at large "boss machines" (e.g., snake-like or squid-like creatures) to break them apart piece-by-piece. The creatures explode into bursts of color when defeated.

Sim Earth, EVERYONE -- *Violent References*, Wii, Hudson Entertainment Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a simulation game in which players explore a new planet and use tools to create habitable living conditions for a civilization. Players can control the temperature, adjust the atmosphere, and customize the landscape using a 2D overhead grid. Players can also "click on" certain icons that represent geological disasters (e.g., hurricanes, volcanoes, and atomic bombs) to alter conditions on the planet.

SingStar Sampler Pack, TEEN -- *Mild Blood, Mild Lyrics, Mild Suggestive Themes*, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a karaoke music game in which players sing along with music videos that feature the recording artists David Bowie, Fergie, Amy Winehouse, Rockwell, and the Smashing Pumpkins. Players score points by matching the pitch and duration of notes displayed on the screen. One music video depicts a woman in her underwear and shirt in bed with her boyfriend. Another video depicts a brief image of blood splattered around a shower stall. Some lyrics contain expletives (e.g., "hell") and indirect references to drugs (e.g., "Morphine city slippin' dues"). One song makes frequent references to alcohol and addiction/rehabilitation (e.g., "...a shot glass," "...I always keep a bottle near," and "He's tried to make me go to re-hab -But I won't - go - go - go - go").

SKIP-BO: Castaway Caper(TM), EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, MAC, PC, Encore Software. ESRB Rating Summary: SKIP-BO: Castaway Caper(TM) is a card game in which players travel around a tropical island playing SKIP-BO with characters they meet. The goal is to be the first player to get rid of all cards in your hand.

Sky Pirates of Neo Terra, EVERYONE -- *Mild Fantasy Violence*, Nintendo DS, Aspyr Media, Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a story-driven racing game in which players control flying vehicles called "Glidewings" to race against rivals. Players can drive through winding tracks, collect gems, and launch small bombs to slow down oppo-

nents. Story elements include references to car accidents and death (e.g., "Council Elah was murdered?" and "I am dying").

Spaceball: Revolution, EVERYONE -- *Mild Fantasy Violence*, Wii, Virtual Toys S.L. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a puzzle game in which players are shown a geometric shape that they must recreate on a grid within a time limit. Players must complete the puzzles as large objects appear and fly around the screen to cause visual distractions. In some levels, players can earn bonus points by shooting down UFOs or robotic heads, resulting in brief explosions.

Space Bust-A-Move, EVERYONE -- *Comic Mischief*, Nintendo DS, Square Enix, Inc. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a puzzle game in which players match three or more same-colored bubbles to clear a play area. As players clear the board, a colorful character is seen at the bottom of the screen cheering them on. If players lose a game, the small character may get zapped, flattened, or shocked by lightning.

Spec Ops: Airborne Commando, TEEN -- *Blood, Violence*, PSP, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.

Spec Ops: Covert Assault, TEEN -- *Violence*, PSP, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.

Spec Ops: Ranger Elite, TEEN -- *Blood, Violence*, PSP, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.

Spec Ops: Stealth Patrol, TEEN -- *Blood, Violence*, PSP, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.

Spectrobes:Origins, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Fantasy Violence*, Wii, Disney Interactive Studios. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a role-playing game (RPG) in which players traverse through space, collect and examine artifacts, and battle enemy aliens to secure the galaxy. Players engage in frequent hand-to-hand combat with crowds of "glob"-shaped or animalistic creatures. Players can use magical spells (e.g., tidal waves, energy beams, etc.), lances, axes, and blasters to attack enemies that disappear in a cloud of smoke when defeated. Explosions, grunting sounds, and colorful bursts highlight the frenetic pace of combat.

Spyro 2 Ripto's Rage, EVERYONE -- *Mild Fantasy Violence*, PSP, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.

Stolen Venus, EVERYONE -- *Alcohol Reference*, PC, Viva Media LLC. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a seek-and-find puzzle game in which players search for hidden items on a screen full of jumbled objects. Players follow the story of a detective who searches for a lost painting called "The Birth of Venus." Some story elements contain references to white wine and wine vineyards.

Sudoku Ball Detective, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Mild Violence, Use of Tobacco*, PC, Nintendo DS, Wii, Playlogic International N.V. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a puzzle/adventure game in which players assume the role of a detective who finds himself in the middle of a murder mystery. Players progress through the story and investigation by completing a series of number puzzles. Story sequences, displayed through text and still images, include an image of a body on the ground, references to murder, and dialogue about finding the killer. One sequence depicts a character threatening another person with a gun. In some scenes, a character can be seen smoking a pipe.

Texas Hold'em Poker, TEEN -- *Simulated Gambling*, Wii, Gameloft. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a simulated gambling game in which players compete against others in Texas Hold'em poker. Players can wager virtual money on poker hands as they compete through tournaments in different international cities. A game tutorial provides gambling advice and instructions to improve players' strategy.

The BIGS 2, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Mild Language, Mild Violence*, Xbox 360, Wii, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 2, PSP, 2K Games. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an arcade-style baseball game in which players can select teams from the official Major League Baseball roster, control a team through a full season, engage in fielding and hitting mini-games, and compete in "over-the-top" games of baseball. Players can leap 10 or 20 feet in the air, run at super speeds, and hit balls further than real players can in "Home Run Pinball." Violent acts are also presented in an exaggerated manner: Batters react to getting hit by pitches to the head by falling face down like a domino; pitchers and fielders get knocked down by hard hit balls; home plate collisions depict runners or catchers flying through the air upon contact. In addition to the voices of announcers and commentators, the game includes crowd hecklers that sometimes yell out "damn."

The Secret of Monkey Island Special Edition, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Alcohol and Tobacco Reference*, Comic Mischief, Mild Cartoon Violence, Suggestive Themes, PC, Xbox 360, Lucasarts. ESRB Rating Summary: Players assume the role of an aspiring pirate in this irreverent "point-and-click" adventure game. Players explore the environment, solve puzzles, and "verbally joust" with characters in an attempt to save a woman in peril. The game includes several comical depictions of characters, including a scene in which a "Meathook" character turns his back to the camera to reveal a slightly exposed buttocks (e.g., "plumber's crack"). During a sword fight, one of the characters uses a suggestive metaphor to describe battle (e.g., "Sword fighting is kinda like making love. It's not always what you do, it's what you say."). While players have no direct control over the sword combat, they can sometimes make/hear comments such as "prepare to die" and "I will milk every drop of blood from your body." One character is depicted with a cigar in his mouth, and another character discusses how rum is an ingredient in a grog mixture.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six, TEEN -- *Blood, Violence*, PSP, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.

Topatol, EVERYONE -- *Comic Mischief*, PlayStation 3, booot. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a puzzle/platformer game in which players ride in a spinning top and ascend levels of a giant tree to save a kidnapped girl. Players can hop between platforms, collect orbs and crystals, and out-

maneuver creatures that are riding in their own spinning vehicles. Players may push enemies off of platforms, causing them to vanish in an orange burst.

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Fantasy Violence*, PSP, Activision-Blizzard. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an action game featuring characters from the Transformers franchise. Players control several robot-like aliens that complete missions across urban environments. Players use laser guns, which are attached to robots' forearms, heavy cannons, and missiles to shoot at vehicles and other robots. Some of the weapons make realistic machine gun sounds, while others emit rapid-fire laser sounds. The game also includes explosions, boss fights, and melee combat attacks that involve the use of swords, spiked balls, and blades in close-ranged battle.

Trash Panic, EVERYONE -- *Mild Cartoon Violence, Mild Language*, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a puzzle game in which players drop items from a conveyor belt into a giant trash bin. Players must smash the items or set them on fire to provide room for more trash. Some of the items, such as propane tanks, oil tankers, and cauldrons, may cause a large explosion that shakes the screen flattens background scenery. The menu screen contains a sign that reads "hell" to indicate one of the harder levels.

Wacky World of Sports, EVERYONE 10+ -- *Mild Cartoon Violence*, Wii, SEGA, ESRB Rating Summary: This is a collection of sports-themed mini-games in which players can compete in whimsical events such as log cutting, lawn mower racing, mud sliding, and "tuna tossing." In a boxing event, players use jabs, hooks, and uppercuts to defeat colorful, fictional opponents. The boxing is viewed from first-person perspective, and some boxers' faces show bruises after being hit.

Wizards of Waverly Place + DGame, Everyone -- *Comic Mischief*, Nintendo DS, Disney Interactive Studios. ESRB Rating Summary: This is an adventure game in which players control characters from the TV series Wizards of Waverly Place. Players learn how to cast spells and make potions while investigating a series of unusual events. Some dialogue contains mild insults (e.g., "What a dork") and tongue-in-cheek humor (e.g., "Thou dost look...hot" and "...my most excellent babe").

XS Junior League Soccer, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, PSP, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.

Zenes - Zen Garden, EVERYONE -- *No Descriptors*, Nintendo DS, The Game Factory Aps. ESRB Rating Summary: This is a collection of puzzle games with ambient Zen garden scenery and sounds. Mini-games include matching, pattern recognition, and seek-and-find puzzles.

Additional Titles

Titles with little or no educational value are listed here. You can look up the complete summaries in the ESRB database (<http://www.ESRB.org>)

750 Super Slots, MAC, PC, GameMill Entertainment.

Aliens in the Attic, Nintendo DS, Playlogic International

Army Rescue, Wii, UFO Interactive Games.

Best of Slots II, MAC, PC, Masque Publishing.

BLEACH: The 3rd Phantom, Nintendo DS, SEGA.

DISSIDIA FINAL FANTASY, PSP, Square Enix, Inc.

Fantasy Zone II, EVERYONE, Wii, SEGA.

Fat Princess, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: My Life as a Darklord, Wii, Square Enix, Inc.

Final Fantasy VII, PSP, PlayStation 3, Sony Computer Entertainment America.

Miami Law, Nintendo DS, Hudson Entertainment Inc.

Last Ninja 2, Wii, Commodore Gaming.

Phantom Brave: We Meet Again, Wii, NIS America, Inc.

Sherlock Holmes vs. Jack the Ripper, PC, DreamCatcher Interactive, Inc.

Revenge of Shinobi, The Wii, SEGA

Winemaker Extraordinaire, MAC, PC, Masque Publishing.

Worldshift, PC, Playlogic International N.V.



Feature Reviews

JUL 1, 2009

Here's an alphabetical listing of new products, along with a full review, ratings and tester feedback. The "Entry Date" refers to the date we first learned of the product.

Back at the Barnyard: Slop Bucket Games

Perfect for making a long car ride pass quickly, this collection of 10 games is based on the Nickelodeon movie/ TV series, which is full of wacky talking animals.

You can play either in story mode, where you move around a map to discover and unlock the games, or in "Quick Event" mode, letting you jump directly to one of the games, providing you've unlocked it already in the story mode. We tried three of the games, and found them to be well designed, taking full advantage of the DS touch screen. For example, Chicken Launch gives you a catapult and a set of moving targets, and Stickbike Stunts is a clever racing game inspired by the online game, LineRider. In the story mode, you try to win the Slop Bucket trophy. Or, if you like, you can roam freely around the Barnyard and chat with the other Barnyard buddies. Some reading is required. Borrow it or buy it. Created by Firemint for THQ, Inc.

Details: THQ, Inc., www.thq.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: timing, logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 11/2/2008. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Educational	8
Entertaining	10
Design Features	9
Good Value	9

90%



ESRB Rating: Everyone, Comic Mischief



Ghostbusters

Easy to play, this fun, movie based scavenger-hunt adventure lets you test your ghost-catching skills as a new member of the Ghostbusters gang. Note that we tested both the Wii and the DS versions and found them to be very different. This review and ratings were done considering the Wii version.

Designed for one or two players (in either single or co-op modes), your job is to capture as many ghosts as possible, which involves exploring the maze-like halls of a hotel, smashing things (don't worry, there's insurance), and stunning ghosts with up to six types of weapons.

When you capture a ghost, you have to "wrangle" it into a containment trap. This involves a series of moves with the Wii Remote that take a bit of learning. Testers noted that the Ghost catching can become a bit redundant, but the variety of weapons and places to explore, mixed with the humorous narrative featuring the original voices of the movie characters, keep things interesting.

The DS version offers more choice over the missions, plus the ability to drive the car around the city. You also have a different objective -- to build your reputation instead of earning money. On first look, it seems to be a fun game.

Prices and ESRB ratings vary by platform as follows: \$40 for Wii, rated E10+; \$40 for the PC, rated T; \$60 for the PS3 and Xbox 360 versions, both rated T; \$30 for the Nintendo DS version, rated E; and \$20 for the PS2 version, rated E10+.

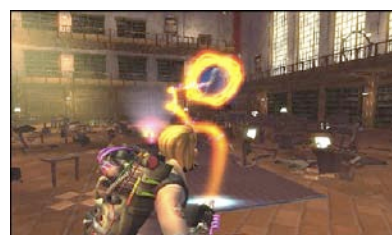
The game website is www.ghostbustersgame.com. Created by Terminal Reality (console version) and RedFly (DS version) for Atari using Infernal Engine technology. The bottom line? This is a fun game that you will at least want to borrow.

Details: Atari, www.atari.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Wii*, Windows, PlayStation 2, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Nintendo DS*. Teaches/Purpose: logic, problem solving, spatial relations (no formal educational content). Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 3/8/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use	8
Educational	N
Entertaining	9
Design Features	8
Good Value	9

85%

ESRB Rating: Everyone 10+, Comic Mischief, Fantasy Violence





Guitar Hero On Tour: Modern Hits (DS)

This third Guitar Hero title for the Nintendo DS has no surprises. You start by inserting the included Guitar Hero Guitar Grip into your Nintendo DS game port (the large one, for Game Boy Advance cartridges). Keep in mind that this game is not compatible with the DSi, which has no Gameboy Advance game slot. Like the Guitar Hero guitar peripherals, the grip has four color-coded buttons. Once the game is started, you turn the DS long-wise and strum on the touch screen using either the stylus or an included pick.

Content includes 28 songs from Coldplay, Fall Out Boy, Tenacious D, The Strokes, Weezer and others. New to this version is the ability to build up your fan base song-by-song through "Fan Requests", such as jamming to an entire song in Hyperspeed or battling it out in a Guitar Duel with active Bomb Notes. The game also features five new venues, and for the first time, you can choose how to take your band from the underground music scene to worldwide rock stardom with the non-linear gameplay progression.

The portability of the game is nice; even the graphics live up to the hype of console Guitar Hero games. Our testers found that their hands would cramp after more than 15 minutes of game play. When on harder game play modes, you need to keep the DS still in order to avoid mistakes.

Details: RedOctane/Activision, www.redoctane.com. Price: . Ages: 10-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: fine motor coordination, rock music. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 6/22/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	86%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	8	

ESRB Rating: Everyone 10+, Lyrics



Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

Richly illustrated and fun to explore, this mostly one player Harry Potter game gives you what you expect... a nice concoction of mystery, duels, adventure, and fantasy. In the game, you steer Harry around the 3D maze-like halls of Hogwarts in an attempt to make it through the sixth year of wizard duels, needed to lead the Gryffindor Quidditch team to victory.

Testers liked the ability to join various clubs in the game, which are helpful for learning spell dueling, potion making, Quidditch playing, and so on. As you explore, you can collect 150 "crests" (old club emblems) hidden in different nooks and crannies of Hogwarts. These can be combined to create one big crest for a hidden secret.

Especially noteworthy with this edition is the way the Wii controls are used. Because the motions have been simplified, they make spell casting fun and easy to learn. You can "stun" with a simple flick with the Wii Remote, for example. But a heavier and more defensive spell requires crossing your arms to create a shield around Harry. This follows your basic instincts, making it easier to learn. Obviously, it is a feature found in the Wii version (we did not test other versions, besides the DS, see below). Another use of the gestures are with potion making. If you want to heat an ingredient, move the Wii Remote in a small circle to see bubbles. If the cauldron needs heating, shake the Nunchuck and Wii Remote together. These tiny details help to make this game easier to learn than previous versions; and a good consideration for a younger player.

Games are saved automatically, and there's enough content for a solid weekend of play. Testers noted that the game play felt repetitive after ten straight missions, however. For example, Harry might encounter a lengthy Quidditch match that could be frustrating for younger players, so be on hand to help.

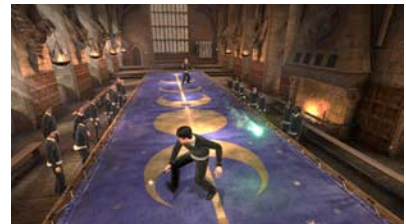
The Nintendo DS version follows the same basic design and story. Differences include the need to collect ingredients for potions by moving around, and a different version of Quidditch that involves a points system instead of just catching the Snitch. In addition, casting spells is done by touching the screen with the DS stylus, similar to previous DS Harry Potter games. The bottom line? In the Half-Blood Prince, you'll get a great Hogwarts experience on any platform.

Details: Electronic Arts, Inc., www.ea.com. Price: \$50, (\$40 for DS, \$30 for PS2/PC/DS). Ages: 7-up. Platform: Wii, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, PlayStation 2, Nintendo DS, PSP, Windows. Teaches/Purpose: logic, strategy. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 5/1/2009. [BK]

Ease of Use	9	90%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	



ESRB Rating: Everyone 10+, Fantasy Violence, Mild Language, Suggestive





I Love Beauty: Hollywood Makeover

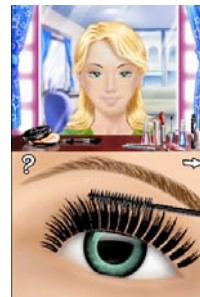
This program turns your Nintendo into a step-by-step hair, nail and makeup tutorial. There's also a game element that tests your ability to help the stars get ready for an A-list event. You will be in charge of hair, makeup, and choosing the right accessories. Content includes 36 types of cosmetics (e.g., base, lipstick, blush and so on). If you color the nails carefully, you earn a good score, and can unlock more customers. A Contest Mode lets you test your skill in three styling competitions, with 13 make-up & hair styling minigames. There are three game save slots. A lot of reading is required, e.g., "Holidays in California at last! Sun, sea and sandy beaches. Great!" The game is effective at introducing a lot of hair and makeup techniques, and the game element makes things interesting. It is definitely worth a borrow.

Details: City Interactive USA Inc., www.city-interactive.com. Price: \$20. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, makeup, fashion. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 5/29/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use 7
Educational 8
Entertaining 9
Design Features 9
Good Value 9

84%

ESRB Rating: Everyone



Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings

Movie based games are as common as popcorn these days, so it is increasingly important that they have unique features. While Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings does a nice job extending the movie, our testers found the experience falls below expectations.

One of the problems is that the game begins with a didactic tutorial that can't be skipped, teaching you things that are intuitive. Other features vary by platform -- we tested the PS2, Wii and DS versions.

In the story, you become Indiana Jones on a quest for the Staff of Moses. As you explore, you jump, whip, fly and punch your way to progressively harder levels. Some are better than others. You must run from a collapsing temple by matching onscreen gesture prompts, or fly a biplane in a canyon trench (frustrating), ride a wild elephant through the streets of Istanbul, and maneuver a raft down a river.

The game is not without some hidden gems, including the cooperative play mode and a four-player biplane battle. As you explore, you can find up to 20 artifacts.

In the DS version of the game, you use your stylus as the whip to swing over pits, fight enemies, and explore. Developed by A2M for the Wii, DS and PS2, and by Amaze for the PSP. Borrow it, but don't pay the full \$50 for it.

Details: LucasArts, www.lucasarts.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Wii, Nintendo DS, PlayStation 2, PSP. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.1 stars. Entry date: 4/9/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use 7
Educational 8
Entertaining 8
Design Features 9
Good Value 9

82%

ESRB Rating: Teen, Mild Language Violence



Legendary Starfy, The

Playful and addicting, this scavenger hunt for the Nintendo DS lets you guide a small animated star character (Starfy) through a maze of progressively harder environments. You swim, jump and bounce along, avoiding bad guys and solving well designed puzzles.

As you play, Starfy picks up new abilities, such as the Shooting Star attack (shoot into the ground like a meteor) and the Air Jump (increase jumping abilities). Minigames include Fishing Derby, Depth Chargers, Sand Tracer, and Dumpling Master, that can be played with friends over a local wireless connection. You can also connect with friends and play through certain of the game's stages as Starfy and his sister, Starly. Note that minimal reading is required. There are two game-save slots, and progress is automatically recorded. We couldn't pry this one out of the hands of our testers. Buy it or borrow it. Developed by TOSE for Nintendo.

Details: Nintendo of America, www.nintendo.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic, strategy. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 6/9/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use 9
Educational 8
Entertaining 10
Design Features 10
Good Value 9

92%



ESRB Rating: Everyone, Mild Cartoon Violence





LEGO Battles

Rich with problem-solving opportunities and potential social play, this turn-based strategy game for Nintendo DS was clearly inspired by games like Age of Empires or Civilization, with the chess-like moves that involve squads of tribesman. In this case, the characters are Lego inspired. Testers found it hard to stop playing.

After you sign into one of the two game-save slots, you choose a mode of play; either single or multiplayer, story or free play. The basic premise of the game is to move your tribe around a map-like screen by highlighting them, and then touching where you want them to go. As you defeat bad guys, you earn various types of bricks, which let you upgrade your players and buildings. The tutorial is well designed, which is good because this is a fairly complex game, with a good deal of reading.

The story mode has six chapters that must be unlocked in sequence by completing various missions such as Content includes 55 playable characters, each with different abilities, and 30 vehicles.

Note that this game was designed by TT games, the creators of Lego Star Wars, which is in no way like this game. The co-creator is Hellbent Games, which created the game for Warner Brothers. Buy it or borrow it.

Details: Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, Inc., www.warnerbros.com. Price: \$25. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic, strategy, in English, French, Spanish. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 6/9/2009. [WB]

Let's Tap

Amazing, innovative but noisy, this is an ideal party game for up to four players who may have never encountered an interactive experience before. It stretches the boundaries of user interface, by tapping into (pun fully intended) the motion sensing technology inside the Wii's controllers.

You start by placing a Wii Remote face down on any surface that can pick up the vibrations that result from a light finger tap. A thin tabletop works just fine; a cardboard box is recommend. Note that the silicone skin is handy for keeping the controller in place.

Once your Remote is in place, you are forced to take a one time only tutorial that introduces you to the basics of the game. Next, you can choose one of the five types of tapping games. Tap Runner is a running race, where each tap equals a step, through 16 courses. The harder levels include hurdles, an ice wall and electric fields. Rhythm Tap (one of our favorites) plays a song and lets you try to match the rhythm with your taps. The closer your match, the higher your score. It feels a lot like Guitar Hero, only with single taps. Silent Blocks lets you use different types of taps to vibrate brick-like blocks loose from a standing column, one at a time. Bubble Voyager is a side-scrolling shooter where harder taps make you float higher in order to avoid objects. A fast double tap launches missiles, needed in order to blast through walls. The last activity is called Visualizer. It is a freeform activity that lets you create fireworks or splotch paint on the screen. The harder you hit, the more paint you throw.

Our testers found these games to be fun, but wished the background music could be turned down in the last activity. All are very easy to play -- if you can tap a table, you can participate. Note that the setup menus take a bit of figuring out, especially since they use the unique "tap" and "double tap" interface. All in all, this is an incredible game, that is worth a look. Developed by Prope for Sega.

Details: Sega of America, www.sega.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Wii. Teaches/Purpose: fine and gross motor coordination, rhythm, movement, logic, temporal relations, art. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 6/16/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	88%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	



ESRB Rating: Everyone 10+, Cartoon Violence



Ease of Use	8	88%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	



ESRB Rating: Everyone, Comic Mischief





Munchables, The

Fast paced fun and zany, this crazy adventure game has the right amount of excitement and problem solving for children ages 6+. The Munchables felt a lot like the Katamari Franchise to our testers, but still has some unique features. The Munchables are hungry creatures whose planet has been taken over by Don Onion and his evil space pirates. In order to survive, the heroes, Munchy and Chomper, must eat and defeat over 150 enemies and grow large enough to defeat the eight enemy bosses including Don Onion himself.

The level succession is great in that kids can go wild at some points and gobble up anything they want. Other special playing modes like Vacuum and Speed allow the player to go even crazier and get point bonuses with the more aliens they eat. The game also features something called Mirror Mode, where stages are in reverse order and you must beat the clock in order to save the world. Customization is also available to your Munchable with clothes and accessories.

The educational side of this game might need some work but the amount of subtitle reading of the characters at least leans towards learning. We felt the pirates might seem frightening to younger players towards the last levels where players fight super-powered enemies and bosses. This Wii featured title shows how designers really go to work and make every piece of the environment visually entertaining. This is a title you might want to borrow, but if you're looking for an exciting adventure for younger players, definitely buy this game.

Details: Namco Bandai Games America Inc., www.namcobandaigames.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Wii. Teaches/Purpose: strategy, timing. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 5/29/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use	10	86%
Educational	7	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	8	

ESRB Rating: Everyone, Comic Mischief
Mild Cartoon Violence



MySims Racing

Similar in many ways to Mario Kart racing and dozens of others, MySims racing offers a fast-paced challenge for one to four players.

We tried the Wii version and found it to be similar to many other driving programs. You start by holding the Wii Remote like handlebars, and pressing the "1" key to accelerate.

Fun features include a flying saucer mode, where you hover above the track and fly over opponents. In addition, you can blast fellow racers with watermelons, beehives or other hazards that will slow them down.

The theme-based tracks are creative and keep things interesting. The more races you win, the more you can customize your kart by swapping bodies, changing paint jobs and adding gadgets. You can also add power-ups, including heat-seeking jack-o-lantern pumpkins or bubble droppers. In addition, you can personalize your MySim's appearance with racing-theme clothes and accessories.

The DS version of the game (\$30) allows up to four players to race each other using local wireless or Nintendo Wi-Fi. There are lots of games like this one. We would have liked the game to be more child-friendly, and for the default settings to be less noisy. One adult tester noted that the game made them seasick.

Details: Electronic Arts, Inc., www.ea.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Wii, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: fine motor coordination, reflexes, timing, strategy, spatial thinking. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 6/9/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	88%
Educational	N	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	8	

ESRB Rating: Everyone





NASCAR Voice Command Rumblin' Racer R/C

Hard to control (at first), this remote-controlled race car comes with a large headset that allows you to say simple commands, such as, "Let's Go" and "Back Left." Once the car understands you, it executes your command -- rather quickly if the batteries are fresh -- but completely ignoring surrounding obstacles. As a result, your test car can become banged up fairly quickly. If you're expecting to easily steer, this is not the car for you. Make sure you use it in a room with a lot of space.

There are nine control commands including: Let's Go; Turn Left; Turn Right; Pace Lap; Back Left; Back Right; Pit Stop; Finish Line; and Victory Lap. The car could be an effective practice for a child learning to make verbalizations.

Requires eight AA batteries, four for the headset and four for the car (not included).

Details: Jakks Pacific, Inc., www.jakkspacific.com. Price: \$60. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: verbal commands, spatial relations, remote-control car. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 5/28/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use	7
Educational	8
Entertaining	9
Design Features	10
Good Value	8

84%



Puzzle Kingdoms

This is a collection of bejeweled-like logic puzzles that can be played against the computer or another player. The DS version is for one player only.

The puzzles are set in a medieval theme, with fun graphic effects and good quality background music. After you sign in and pick a character (either male or female), you choose to play in campaign mode (like a board game) or jump right to the mini-games. You can pick one of five challenge levels, from easy to hard. We tried the easy level, but still failed on our first try, partly because there is no tutorial. In the puzzles, you are shown a 6x6 grid, and match icons by sliding rows up or down, or left or right. Correct matches earn you gold and power, which is needed to take over the next castle if you are playing in the campaign mode.

While it is rich in problem-solving opportunities, this title is limited in mass-appeal. Frosting is provided by good quality period music and a board game campaign mode, in which your progress can be saved. Borrow it. Also note this library circulation issue: two profiles can be saved on the DS card, which will need to be erased. There is no worrisome content. Created for Zoo Games by Zushi Games Ltd.

Details: Zoo Games Inc., www.zoogamesinc.com. Price: \$20. Ages: 10-up. Platform: Nintendo DS, Wii. Teaches/Purpose: logic, classification. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 6/9/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use	7
Educational	9
Entertaining	8
Design Features	8
Good Value	8

80%

ESRB Rating: Everyone 10+, Mild Violence



Scoops

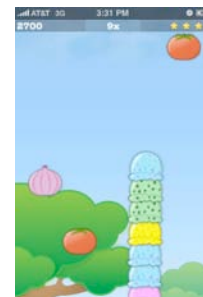
Addicting and easy to play, Scoops is an iPhone/iPod Touch app that challenges you to sort falling scoops of ice cream by leaning your iPhone or iPod Touch screen left or right. The objective is to score points by matching the scoops, while avoiding vegetables. The longer you can keep your stack growing, the faster things fall, and the higher your score. The task is a good exercise both in classification, as well as general motor skills.

High scores are saved and shared online. Drawbacks include a scoring system that uses hundreds and thousands, which has little meaning for preschoolers. In addition, children are encouraged to send an email message about their progress -- a viral marketing technique. That aside, for \$2, Scoops is definitely worth the download.

Details: Nimblebit, www.nimblebit.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: classification, logic, gross motor coordination (tilting the iPhone). Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 4/15/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Educational	8
Entertaining	8
Design Features	9
Good Value	10

88%





Sims 3, The

Smarter and better looking, this edition of the Sims 3 gives you more ways to customize your Sim characters, as well as the ability to move from house to house (for the first time). This edition also offers more realism—right down to eyeliner color, although we would have liked more choices in hair styles. Try to find normal long hair... you can't find it.

In addition to the outward appearances, you can choose from five inner attributes, including romantic, kleptomaniac or evil. The new goal-oriented gameplay allows you to choose short- or long-term objectives for your Sims, and decide whether or not they will achieve them. Other features include the ability to create, edit and share your own movies by setting up the cameras in your Sim's home.

All in all, the smoother interface and increased detail make the Sims 3 a major improvement over an already amazing program. It is available either as a download or on CD, for one (single) user at once for up to five machines. Even if you have the disk, remember that the program won't run unless the disk is in the drive. Be sure to check your graphics card requirements closely, as Sims 3 can challenge minimally equipped computers. Finally, if you purchase your copy online as a download, registration is limited to one EA account per serial code and is non-transferable. Get ready to read some fine print during the installation.

Included with this edition is \$10 worth of SimPoints that can be used to purchase additional items. A collector's edition is available for \$70.

Details: Electronic Arts, Inc., www.ea.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 13-up. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, iPhone, iPod Touch, mobile devices. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, relationships, logic. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 4/30/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	94%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	9	



ESRB Rating: Teen



TV Games Sing Scene Pop

If you could take this all-in-one pitch-sensing microphone back five years, it would be nothing less than miraculous, especially for \$30. Today, however, it is less impressive; although it works, as long as you invest the time to learn the songs.

Taking the Jakks Pacific plug-and-play TV games in a new direction, Sing Scene Pop (\$30) consists of a single fat microphone that plugs directly into the A/V jacks of your television. Other than the four AAA batteries, nothing else is needed. Turn it on using a switch on the side, and you're greeted with a menu of 10 songs that vary in difficulty level -- even though we couldn't get through even the easiest (one star) songs.

Like Karaoke Revolution or Rock Band, you try to match your voice to the scrolling lyrics. Good matches earn points, and keep you in the song. A "Vocal Meter" tells you when you hit, or miss, the notes.

The graphics are good for a plug-and-play TV game. Testers noted that there was a bit of a background hiss if you turn up the volume, plus there's only one channel of audio. In addition, the song list seems to be predominately female, featuring artists such as Rihanna, Alicia Keys, Fergie, Taylor Swift, and Miley Cyrus. They would have liked easier songs at the start, even though there's a practice mode. There are also Rock and Country musical styles versions available.

Bottom line? If you're looking for a voice-recognition-based Karaoke system, it's hard to argue with the value of this all-in-one system. Created by HotGen for Jakks Pacific.

Details: Jakks Pacific, Inc., www.jakkspacific.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 8-up. Platform: TV. Teaches/Purpose: singing. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 5/28/2009. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	84%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	

ESRB Rating: Everyone, Lyrics





Up!

Beautiful, challenging and fun for either one or two players, this one or two player cooperative game takes you inside the Disney/Pixar film Up! Our testers enjoyed the creative twists and found plenty to do among the chapters of this game.

The game follows the movie, where an old man and young boy partner on a journey to Paradise Falls in a floating house. Designed in chapters, the game cleverly weaves the movie's flying theme with fighting anacondas, canoeing past crocodiles and sneaking past man-eating plants. There's a lot of steering and strategy, with minimal reading.

We especially liked the drop in, drop out game play (in the Wii and Xbox editions) making it easy for a little brother or parent to pick up a controller at any time and join the game. Other activities include gliding down water slides to collect coins and flying airplanes to shoot down enemies. Each player has specific attributes needed to make it through the level. Some of the monsters (like the snake) will be scary to younger players, but don't go too far. There is no other worrisome content. All in all, this game is a fun adventure that any member of the family can enjoy.

Note that the PC version uses the keyboard controls, which can be tricky to learn. Visit www.upvideogame.com. This title should not be confused with a teaser iPhone app that is nothing more than a balloon popping game.

Details: THQ, Inc., www.thq.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Wii, Windows, Xbox 360, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: cooperation, logic, problem solving. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 3/25/2009. [BK]

Wonder Pets!, The: Save the Animals!

This mixture of excessive narration, innovative input techniques (e.g., using your voice) and clumsy design features the Nickelodeon Wonder Pets: Linnie the Guinea Pig, Ming-Ming Duckling and Turtle Tuck.

After choosing one of the three game-save slots, children are asked to help with one of three challenges, by helping a Bengal Tiger, a Panda Bear, or a Chimpanzee in need. Along the way, they encounter one of 10 short challenges that involve dragging puzzle parts to a template, spinning a wheel with the DS stylus to open a trap door, exploring a dark screen to find hidden items, or speaking into the DS microphone to move a fly through a tube. While the activities are potentially fun, they are introduced with sugary narration that can't be interrupted. In addition, some of the games are didactic (one right answer), creating bottlenecks that may frustrate younger children. Finally, for some reason, the menus require some reading.

Up to three games can be saved on the game cartridge. Bag it or borrow it. Created by Black Lantern Studios for 2K Play.

Details: 2K Play, www.take2games.com. Price: \$20. Ages: 4-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic, following instructions, music, memory, fine motor skills. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.4 stars. Entry date: 9/8/2008. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	95%
Educational	N	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	9	

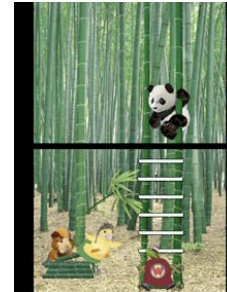


ESRB Rating: Everyone, Cartoon Violence



Ease of Use	7	68%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	6	
Good Value	6	

ESRB Rating: Everyone





Future Releases & Updates

JUL 1, 2009

This section contains a listing of products in the process of being reviewed, but not yet rated. We also include significant updates of older products.

All Star Cheer Squad 2

Coming Fall 2009, All Star Cheer Squad 2 uses a new Nunchuk-free control mechanism, so there is no wire to worry about. Instead, you hold two Wii Remotes -- one in each hand -- to represent your pompoms.

In the game, you are part of a team that is competing in 14 locations from around the world. You start as the captain of the Tiger Squad and try to lead your team to victory by mastering moves that include the Wii Balance Board (optional). The routines were created by Tony G. Features include the ability to customize your players' makeup, hairstyle and uniforms, and an upgraded routine editor with a music mixer and choreography editor, plus the ability to challenge friends via WiiConnect24. Developed by Gorilla for THQ.

Details: THQ, Inc., www.thq.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Wii.
Teaches/Purpose: sports (cheering), following directions, rhythm, physical education. Entry date: 6/24/2009.



Cars Race-O-Rama

This third installment in the Pixar-inspired game lets players join Lightning McQueen and Chick Hicks as they prepare for the Race-O-Rama Exhibition. Content includes 12 playable characters and tracks inspired from city streets, the desert and beaches. It is now possible to modify Lightning McQueen's look and pose him for reporters. Multiplayer mini-games are based on Disney/Pixar's "Cars Toons," a series of animated shorts that are currently being aired on the Disney Channel.

Visit www.carsvideogame.com.

Details: THQ, Inc., www.thq.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Wii, Nintendo DS, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, PSP, PlayStation 2. Teaches/Purpose: car racing, timing, logic, some creativity. Entry date: 6/24/2009.



Diva Girls: Divas on Ice

Pick your favorite Diva girl (from four options -- Kelly, Gabrielle, Alyssa and Madison), help them pick out an outfit, and then design a winning ice skating routine. The Wii version uses the Wii Balance Board to make the skating more realistic. Coming Fall '09.

Details: 505 Games (US), Inc., www.505games.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Wii, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, skating. Entry date: 6/9/2009.



Drawn To Life: The Next Chapter

Previously only available for the DS, this edition of Drawn To Life (for both the Wii and the DS) will feature better drawing tools that let players create new worlds to explore. In the Wii edition, players use the Wii Remote draw tools to find the Artifacts of Power and rid the Raposa village of evil. There are 100 unique items to draw. A new Action Drawing tool allows for objects to be drawn directly into the game to help navigate through environments. A multi-player feature will allow players to draw their team members and equipment in mini-games, such as soccer, hockey and basketball. The Nintendo DS version lets players draw humans, animals or multi-limbed creatures using the DS stylus. Players will have the ability to morph their hero into a blob or a spider, adding more gameplay and allowing for players to play each level a variety of different ways. The game's Action Drawing Tool gives each color special properties when drawing objects into the game. There are coins to collect that unlock new content. For more information, visit www.drawntolife.com. Coming Fall 2009.

Details: THQ, Inc., www.thq.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Nintendo DS, Wii. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, logic. Entry date: 6/25/2009.





Eye Pet

Bringing a new and interesting twist to the crowded virtual pet category, Sony has developed a sim designed to put you inside your monitor, where you can play with your pet on a more direct level. Designed for PS3 systems with the PlayStation Eye (required), EyePet is a virtual animal that requires daily care and feeding. The pets, which look like a cross between a monkey and a kitten, can learn and develop skills, become more intelligent and agile, and earn rewards. You can place an object such as a toy in front of the camera to see your pet interact with it. Pets can be tickled by waving your finger in front of the camera, poked or chased. It is possible to customize your pet with different toys and clothing items, from a library of 250 fashion items. Coming Fall 2009.

Details: Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc., www.us.playstation.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 3-up. Platform: PlayStation 3. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, causality. Entry date: 6/23/2009.



Habitat Heroes (www.HabitatHeroes.com)

Designed in Australia, this MMOG (Massively Multiplayer Online Game) is designed to introduce conservation to elementary age children. The program lets you adopt an animal from an endangered species list and then create your own virtual world in which it can live. It is paid for by sponsors, and offers virtual money in exchange for your friends' email addresses.

The avatar creation idea is creative. Because there are a limited number of endangered animals available in the real world, there are also a limited number of avatars allowed in each world. So, for example, only 3600 members can choose a black rhino for an avatar. In the game, children can chat with other avatars via chat boxes at the "Watering Hole", and online chats are monitored, but parents also have the option to limit use of this function with a safe chat. We were able to easily register and create an avatar (a rare sea turtle) although the navigation felt sluggish.

The site allows children to explore the different continents by touring a virtual map. Each continent has its own games. For example, in Africa they can play Water Wheel, a game in which players construct an irrigation system in an African village. Each game allows the child to earn "creature cash" for resolving environmental challenges, which can then be used to purchase food, clothing, and more for their avatar. The creators of the Flash-based site are seeking corporate sponsors, whose logos appear in specific areas of the site. There are no subscription fees. Visit www.habitatheros.com.

Details: Habitat Heroes, www.habitatheroes.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 6-11. Platform: Internet Site, Windows, Mac OSX. Teaches/Purpose: science, conservation, ecology. Entry date: 6/11/2009.



Hannah Montana PSP Entertainment Pack

Targeting girls 8-up, this \$200 bundle includes a lilac colored (don't say "pink") PSP 3000, a UMD disk containing video footage from the three Hannah Montana TV shows, plus a video game called Montana: Rock Out The Show. In the game, you visit seven locations to create custom concerts, which includes stage sets, songs, and performers. Extra frosting includes stickers that you can use to decorate your PSP and a 2GB Memory Stick. Visit <http://www.us.playstation.com/PSP>.

Details: Sony Computer Entertainment America, www.scea.com. Price: \$200. Ages: 8-up. Platform: PSP. Teaches/Purpose: a handheld gaming system. Entry date: 6/29/2009.

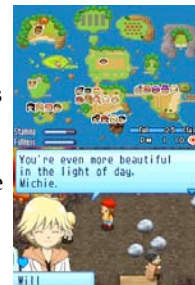


Harvest Moon Sunshine Islands

Coming Summer 2009 for the Nintendo DS, Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands puts you in the middle of yet another promising interactive adventure from Natsume.

In the story, the islands are in peril after an earthquake. You must raise the sunken islands by finding the magical Sun Stones. As you do, you meet new characters, harvest crops, and make friends with ducks, monkeys, and badgers. You also meet characters from Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness. You can grow and harvest crops, care for animals, mine, fish, and compete in festivals in an attempt to find love and start a family.

Details: Natsume, www.natsume.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic, classification, reading. Entry date: 5/21/2009.





JumpStart Pet Rescue

Here's a headline for educational software watchers. For the first time, there will be a JumpStart title made for the Wii. Perhaps more importantly, one of the lead designers is Jeffery Kessler, the creator of several of the better Reader Rabbit titles. Coming Fall 2009, JumpStart Pet Rescue is set in a 3D world, where children can create their own Jumpee and paddle through rivers, discover treasures in a jungle, and make friends with furry pets. Content will include 50 lessons that reinforce 75 school-related skills.

Details: Knowledge Adventure, Inc., www.knowledtheadventure.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Wii. Teaches/Purpose: math, reading, logic, counting, letter recognition. Entry date: 6/8/2009.

KIDO'Z (www.kidoz.net)

This specialized browser makes it possible for parents to both filter and white-list content for young children. The system blocks links, scripts and other attempts that lead to sites and content that has not been approved. The parental control account is password protected. When you add content for your child that is not private, it is added to the public content stream so other children can have access to it. The browser runs in 17 languages.

Details: KIDO'Z Ltd., www.kidoz.net. Price: \$free. Ages: 3-7. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: Internet browser for children. Entry date: 2/25/2009.



LEGO Rock Band

Looking for a kinder, gentler Rock Band experience, with easier songs with more family sensitive lyrics? That's the goal of LEGO Rock Band, which has been designed by Traveller's Tales, Harmonix and Backbone Entertainment for the Xbox 360, Wii and PS3.

There are two modes of play -- Build a Band and Rock the Universe. You create your own rock star avatar, and then complete songs and rock challenges to earn more LEGO studs, which unlock new songs and blocks. As with other versions of Rock Band, your goal is to master songs and advance your career.

Songs include the Jackson 5's "I Want You Back", Foo Fighters' "Breakout", Vampire Weekend's "A-Punk", Blur's "Song 2", Carl Douglas' "Kung Fu Fighting", Europe's "The Final Countdown", Good Charlotte's "Boys and Girls" and Pink's "So What." Coming Fall 2009.

Details: Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, Inc., www.warnerbros.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Xbox 360, Wii, PlayStation 3. Teaches/Purpose: a rhythm-based music game. Entry date: 6/23/2009.

LioLoScope

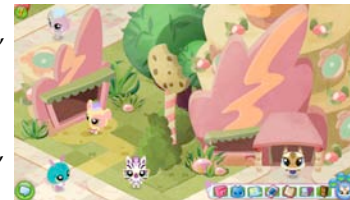
Per the June 19 edition of Gadgetwise (NYTimes.com), comes word of LioLoScope, a free video editor for Windows that you can get as a download. Note that the "super" version costs \$70, and offers more HD options, and the editing of multiple tracks. Also, make sure your video card can support PixelShader 2.0. The program is popular in Japan, and has instant YouTube publishing abilities in several formats, including MP4. Visit www.loilo.tv

Details: LoiLo, Inc., www.loilo.tv. Price: \$free. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Windows. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, video editing. Entry date: 6/19/2009.

Littlest Pet Shop Online

Not to be confused with Littlest Petshop, or the related series of games for the Wii and DS, this Webkinz-like virtual world/toy combination found at www.lps.com will be designed specifically for girls. There will be 12 plush toys, sold and distributed by Hasbro. The world will be designed and developed by Electronic Arts, all in Flash, so there will be no need for downloads or installations. In addition, anyone can register and get in, without a pet. However, you'll quickly find that your options are limited, unless you have one of the \$15 animals, and the code that goes with it. Features will include chat, daily events, house parties and different mini-games found on different islands. Children can also customize rooms, build a floor plan & their own wallpaper.

Details: Hasbro, Inc., www.hasbro.com. Price: \$15/year. Ages: 6-10. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: chat, creativity, spatial relations. Entry date: 2/28/2009.





ModNation Racers

Bringing a dose of welcome creativity to the racing genre of games, ModNation Racers is worth keeping an eye on. The game is planned for 2010 for the PS3.

First, imagine a fun Kart racing game of the Mario Kart variety. Next, mix in a powerful track editor of the Roller Coaster Tycoon variety. Finally, layer in some social features, like the ability to share your track, or download other tracks, and you get the idea of this innovative title. It is easy to layout track, make lakes, mountains, trees, banked turns; combined with speed boosts, drifting and weapons. You can save your track online, and invite other players (friends or strangers) to race with you. Other features include a matchmaking tool, the ability to save your scores on a public leaderboard, and a set of chat features. Designed for 1-2 players offline or 2-12 players online.

Details: Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc., www.us.playstation.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 6-up. Platform: PlayStation 3. Teaches/Purpose: sports, racing, creativity. Entry date: 6/24/2009.



Perception Zone

Priced at \$6 per download, this is an interactive adventure series from France that lets children build with objects in three dimensions using shapes, colors and sounds.

Once the game is downloaded, children can play it on their own without having to go online, providing it is installed successfully on their Windows computer. The breakdown into episodes lets them develop and progress at their own speed. From one episode to the next, they face new challenges that stimulate their creative potential.

Episode 1: "First Flight with Phileo" introduces the child to the characters and tells him or her about the journey. Visit www.iango.com for more information.

Details: Univers Numeriques, www.iango.com. Price: \$6/episode. Ages: 3-8. Platform: Windows, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations. Entry date: 3/2/2009.



Play With Pictures

Play With Pictures lets students cut out people and props from digital images using a paint-by-number like technique. The cut-outs are then layered onto a background and embellished with a set of controls that include blending tools, retouching tools for object colors, tints and transparency, and the ability to add titles, captions or speech bubbles. Visit <http://www.playwithpictures.com/>.

Details: Vertus, vertustech.com. Price: \$40. Ages: 5-up. Platform: Mac OSX, Windows. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, paint by numbers. Entry date: 5/27/2009.



Postman Pat: Special Delivery Service

Based on the television series on the BBC, you must help Postman Pat deliver letters and packages to people all over Greendale and Pencaster. Along the way, you help Pat solve puzzles, games and brain teasers. The game also reinforces the values of Postman Pat in a "fun and humorous way."

Details: Compedia USA, www.compedia-usa.com. Price: \$20. Ages: 3-6. Platform: Windows. Teaches/Purpose: letter and number recognition, arithmetic, values. Entry date: 6/9/2009.

Princess and the Frog, The

Inspired by the animated film, this game will include 25 mini-games, for 1-4 players.

The DS version is a platforming side scrolling game, with jumping, swinging and soaring in order to collect ingredients and recipes, cook dishes, and perform music. The DGamer feature lets children connect with friends online and unlock additional content. English, Spanish and French options are available. Designed by Amaze and Griptonite Games.

Details: Disney Interactive Studios, www.disney.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Wii, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 6/9/2009.



SavePlanetBlue.com

Here's an online community with a green agenda where you earn merit badges for learning about topics like pollution, deforestation and drought. The site uses a velvet rope model -- getting in is free; additional games and features are reserved for paying members. (\$5 for three months, \$23 for six months and \$39 for a year). We tried the free option and found the navigation to be very clumsy, but this could be browser related (we were using Safari on an older Macintosh).

Details: BlueVision Entertainment, www.saveplanetblue.com. Price: \$39/year (free trial). Ages: 4-7. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: ecology. Entry date: 6/24/2009.



Spectrobes: Beyond the Portals

The sequel to last year's Spectrobes, this 1-4 player Nintendo DS title is thick with fighting. It continues the story of Rallen and Jeena, two interplanetary patrol officers who discover, excavate, awaken and train fossilized creatures know as Spectrobes and use them to battle enemies. Content includes 100 creatures, gadgets and a customizable patrol cruiser.

The game can be played with two to four players using the DS Wireless connection. Visit www.spectrobes.com/community.

Details: Disney Interactive Studios, www.disney.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: logic. Entry date: 10/20/2008.



SpongeBob's Truth or Square

Coming Fall '09, for multiple platforms, this interactive celebration of SpongeBob's last ten years let players change SpongeBob's shape. In the one player mode, you search for the missing Krabby Patty formula in 3D versions of the Jellyfish Fields, Bikini Bottom and others. As you run, jump, spin and hammer through the ten levels, you discover classic SpongeBob moments, such as when he becomes a fry cook or meets Sandy for the first time. SpongeBob can morph into a Spatula, Propeller or Sledgehammer in the battle against treacherous obstacles and Plankton's robots. In the co-op mode, two players can control Plankton to help SpongeBob solve puzzles. As with the previous SpongeBob titles, this version was developed by Heavy Iron Studios for THQ. It looks like it will continue the legacy of fun, action-packed SpongeBob interactivity.

Details: THQ, Inc., www.thq.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 6-up. Platform: Wii, Nintendo DS, Xbox 360, PSP. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, logic. Entry date: 6/25/2009.



Spore Hero

Exotic monsters that you help create are coming to your TV screen and handhelds, with this adaptation of the Spore game. First released last year for Mac & Windows, this version will run on the Wii, iPhone, iPod Touch and Nintendo DS. At the core of the game is the ability to make your own creature by mixing and matching parts, and then trying to use it to save your home world from destruction. In the Wii version, you use the Wii Remote to navigate throughout a 3D galaxy, as you hunt for 250 parts, each providing additional creature abilities.

The Nintendo DS version, called Spore Hero Arena is a 1-4 player experience that can be played over Wi-Fi, that takes up where last year's Spore Creatures left off. After you make your creature, you visit a 3D galaxy as a setting for arena-based combat with your creature. By combining abilities, parts, and upgrades, players create a unique fighting style. Spore Hero and Spore Hero Arena will be available fall 2009.

Details: Electronic Arts, Inc., www.ea.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Wii, iPhone, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, strategy. Entry date: 6/24/2009.





Vector City Racers

Now in beta, this online racing game bills itself as a real-time, browser-based racing game. Because it is designed in Flash, no download or installation is required. Designed for boys aged 6-12 years, the site combines the ability to customize and race cars in a community setting. In the game, your car is your avatar. Content includes ten tracks, and a store where you can buy car upgrades. High scores can be saved. Community aspects include both moderated and "snap chat" (common phrases for quick communication). Visit www.vectorcityracers.com.

Details: Vector Entertainment, Inc., www.vectorcityracers.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 6-12. Platform: Windows, Mac OSX, Internet Site. Teaches/Purpose: racing, chat. Entry date: 5/18/2009.

