

Choosing Apps For Young Children: A Tip Sheet for Families



As family members, you know your children well. You understand their interests, goals, and abilities and want the best for them. When it comes to choosing apps for your children, it can seem overwhelming. There are a range of different types of apps available. Apps that provide entertainment or support children in building academic skills can be useful at certain times.

Open-ended apps can also be beneficial to children's development. If you are looking for more open-ended apps we have provided some guidelines to support you, based on what we have learned through our research.

Supporting Children's Development:

- To support creativity, look for apps that require children to create their own content (e.g. drawings, photographs, videos, audio)
- To support gross motor development, look for apps that require children to engage with the world around them (e.g.

apps that suggest outdoor activities, scavenger hunt nature apps, identification apps for insects, plant life)

- To support the development of social skills, look for apps that can be used in collaborative ways (e.g. opportunity for multiple users)
- To support language and literacy development, look for apps that offer a variety of self-expression options (e.g. keyboard, audio, drawing, photography)

Questions to Ask:

- Do children have opportunities to explore their own interests, record their own ideas?
- Does the app offer the potential to collaborate with peers?
- Are there opportunities for creativity?
- Does the app encourage and support problem-solving?
- Are there opportunities for children to make their own choices?
- Does the app promote children's individual expression?
- Does the app encourage intrinsic motivation and sense of accomplishment?

- Can children's work be saved, either within the app or by downloading content?
- Can multiple children have their own space within the app, such as their own file or username?
- Can children use the app independently once they are familiar with the process and navigation steps?

Things to Avoid

- Apps whose main focus is practicing a specific skill or narrow range of actions (e.g. letters, numbers, colours or similar concepts)
- Apps whose main focus is passively viewing content (e.g. videos)
- Extrinsic motivators (e.g. points, rewards)
- Depiction of stereotypes
- Advertisements and links to external websites