



Android Literacy Apps

Review of a selection of android apps for literacy

The use of tablet apps for supporting literacy is becoming increasingly popular. This guide is intended to review some of the different apps available on Android tablets, exploring how the different apps have different advantages and disadvantages for different ages and types of student.



Easy Writing

Recommended for younger students or those students with severe handwriting difficulties

Easy Writing is an interactive writing app that helps you learn how to write by tracing letters, numbers, words, shapes and colours.

The app consists of a number of categories (including upper- and lowercase letters, numbers shapes and words). When a category is selected, a series of letters or words are shown. You can then hear the letter/word read aloud by tapping the sound icon in the top left hand corner.



You practice writing the letter by using your finger to trace the letter outline within the dashed white lines (it is not possible to draw outside these lines). You can change colour by tapping on a different coloured pencil.

This game was liked by younger students but it was too easy for more advanced students. In particular, those students who were a little more advanced disliked the app not showing paint outside the lines as this meant they couldn't see their mistakes.

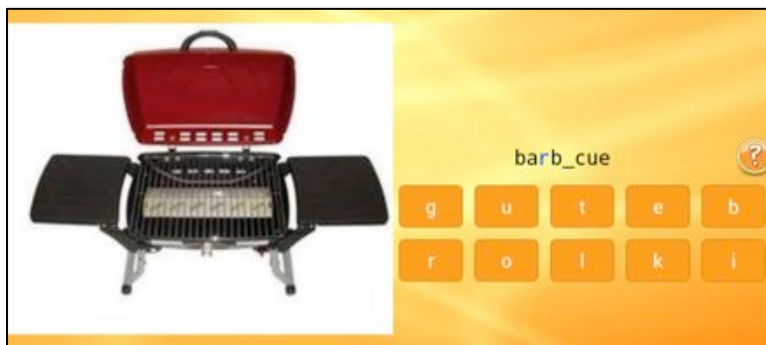
The app helps students' handwriting in addition to introducing some basic, but common, vocabulary.



Learn English 6000 Words

Recommended for students who need to build their vocabulary, such as those with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Learn English is a vocabulary app with 7 games to enable vocabulary practice within 15 different topics.



The topics include, amongst others, People, Health, Shopping, Transport and Work. You can then select a sub-topic within each of these and choose from one of seven games:

- Listen & Choose: in this game you hear a word spoken aloud and have to select the image that matches that word.
- Match Words: in this game you have to find the matching pairs between two columns of words
- Listen & Write: in this game you have to type out the word that is read aloud to you.
- Write Word: in this game you have to fill in the gaps in a word.
- Vocabulary: in this activity you can practice your pronunciation of different words.
- Find Image: in this game you have to select the correct image that matches the word displayed.
- Choose Word: in this game you are shown an image and have to select the word that matches the image.

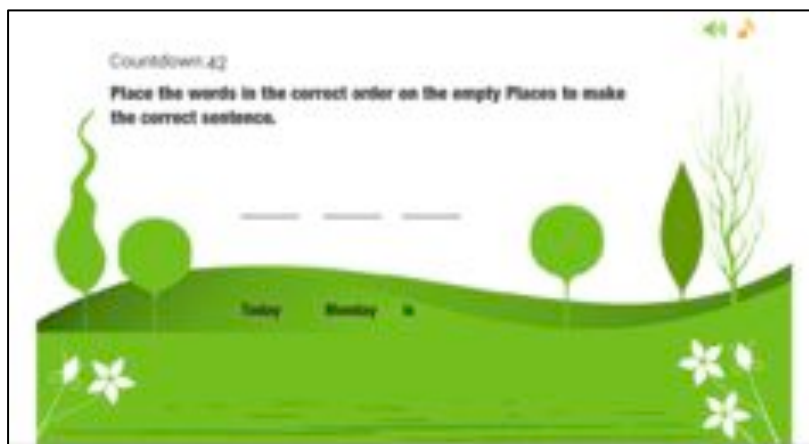
The games are all good for developing vocabulary, but some games are more challenging than others. We found that the Listen & Write was particularly suitable for more advanced students.



Make a Sentence game

Recommended for students who need help with grammar and sentence construction

The Make a Sentence game is a sentence-building app to practice sentence construction.



Within each level of the game you have a set amount of time to complete each sentence. You are given the words in the wrong order and simply need to drag and drop the words onto the correct dashed line.

In more advanced levels the player is given very little time to rearrange the words making it quite challenging.

While the app helps students practice fluency by constructing sentences at speed, it is somewhat limited in that the number of sentences is fixed and no custom content can be added, so it is unlikely to be useful for the same child over an extended period of time. However, this is the best sentence construction app we have found for the Android platform.



SuperCard Flashcards

Recommended for all students as can be fully customized to their level and difficulties

SuperCard is a flashcard app that provides multiple ways to create and revise image or text flash cards.

SuperCard allows you to create your own packs of cards meaning you can create packs that relate to each student's specific areas of difficulty.

Each card can contain either text or images on one side with a description or answer on the other side. The images could be created by the students using the drawing functionality or by taking photos. To create the cards more quickly, they can be created on the computer and transferred into the app. If you do this please ensure that all of the cards have unique names – otherwise, when you change a card, all of the cards will change.

Once you have created your packs of cards there are three types of quiz that you can choose to play. The first is the "honor system" – the top side of the card will be displayed and you need to say the answer aloud before flipping the card and self-checking your answer. The second quiz type is "multiple choice" – the top side of the card will be displayed and you have to select your answer from a choice of four options. The final quiz type is "exact text" – the top side of the card will be displayed and you need to type in the exact answer that is displayed on the other side.

To be most effective the app needs to be played with a teacher to support the students in their motivation and self-reflection. The app is extremely well designed and useable. It is an enjoyable app for students to use, particularly if they are given the opportunity to create/customize their own cards. The only downside of the app is that it does require an investment of time in order to create cards for each student.





Sight Words Hangman

Recommended for students who need to practice their sight words

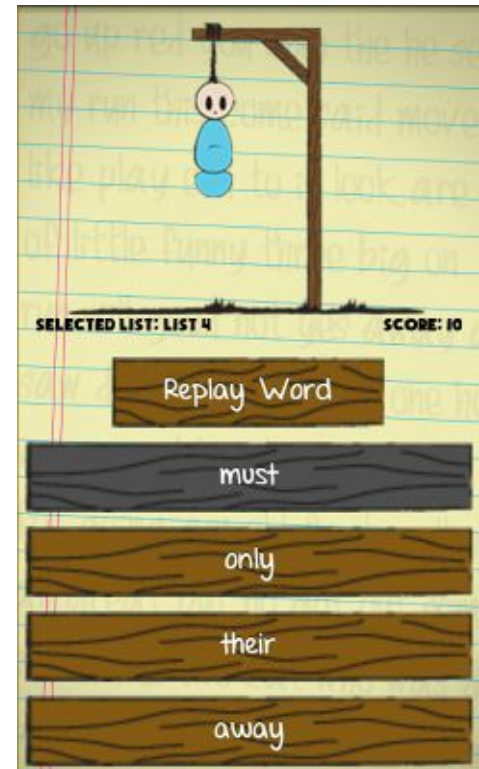
The Sight Words Hangman app helps students practice 250 common sight words within a hangman style game.

The words are split into a number of lists. Once a list is selected, the player hears and views the word and then selects the word they think is correct. If they select the correct word they progress on to the next word. If they select the wrong word a body part of the hangman shows up on the screen and then the student is given 5 more opportunities to guess the correct answer.

This app was one of the most straightforward to use we reviewed. The app has a good system of progression with the earlier lists being easy to complete and later lists being more complex.

The text-to-speech does use an American accent, which could cause difficulties for some students.

The app has the potential to help with various skills including sight word recognition, spelling and auditory processing.

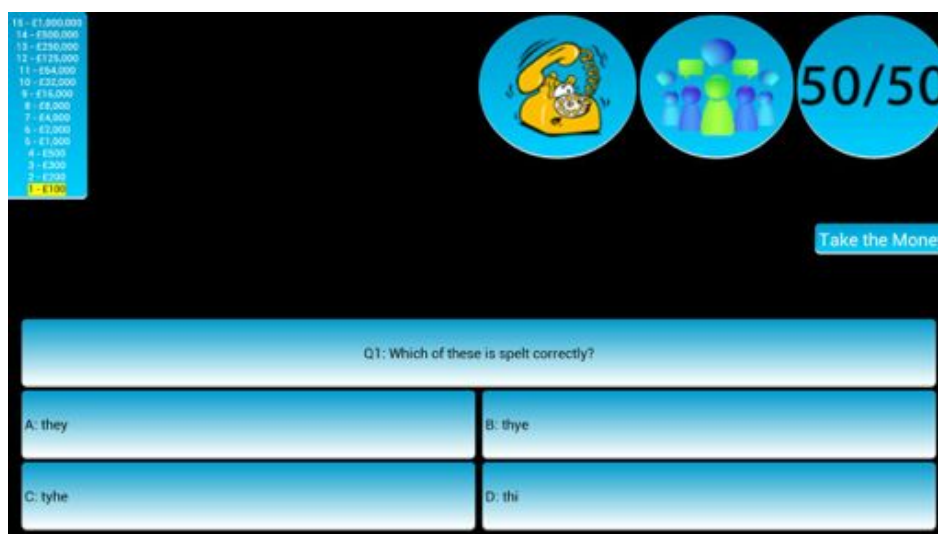




EduDroid

Recommended for all students as includes extensive content

eduDroid provides a variety of games, quizzes and tools to increase students' understanding and knowledge of both literacy and numeracy.



The app consists of a variety of literacy games including:

- **Spelling..Aire** - a 'Who wants to be a millionaire' style quiz that tests students on many aspects of literacy including sentence structure, word meanings and spelling patterns
- **eBooks** - a collection of fiction and non-fiction books.
- **Learn Letters** – a tool for your student to hear how letters should sound phonically and see words that begin with that letter.

The students who used this app enjoyed it and found it easy to use. In the "**Spelling..Aire**" game, students dealt well with getting answers wrong. Some of the e-books are very short, particularly for older students.

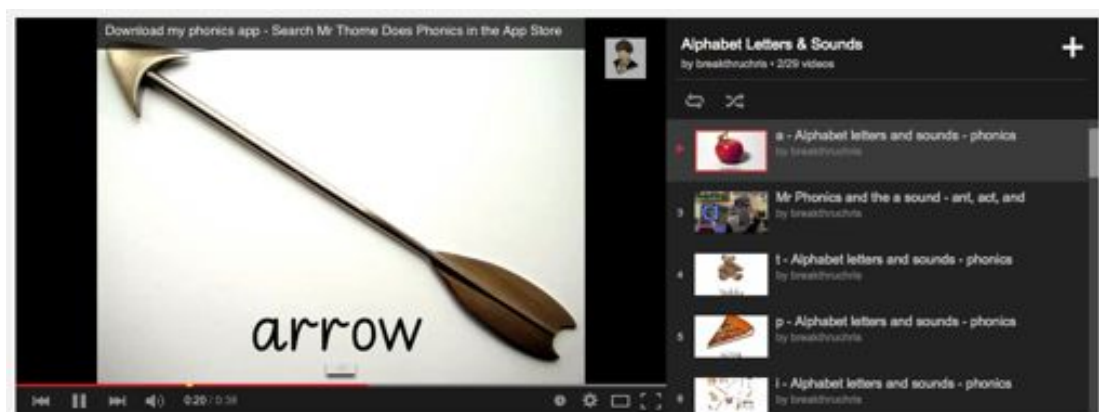
While the app has a huge range of different activities, practicing a range of skills, this vast choice of content could cause confusion for some students



YouTube

Recommended for all students as videos can be found for their level and difficulties

YouTube is the hugely popular video-sharing site that most children are both familiar with and enjoy.



Beyond the day-to-day videos your students might enjoy, there are also a host of educational videos which can both entertain and engage students. The videos are particularly useful for linking the written form of a word with its sound.

There are videos available for students of all different levels on a vast number of topics. One of the main difficulties of using YouTube in lessons is finding the right videos. For this we would recommend finding pre-constructed playlists that cover a particular topic. For an example, Mr. Thorne (<https://www.youtube.com/user/breakthruChris/playlists>) has videos covering everything from spellings & grammar through to alphabet letters and sounds.

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