

IPad Apps Notes– 2017

My opinions. Yours may be different. IPad apps are constantly changing – name, price, capability, upgrade, glitches, etc. These are some of my favorites, specifically useful to address writing challenges.

For kids who hate to write: The IPad can be a game changer. Whether your student hates to write because of difficulty with language, organization, sensory, or motor challenges, the IPad can allow you to teach your target skill, but in a format that most kids think is fun.

For kids who need help with letter formation:

- **I Write Words Lite:** (lite version only has a,b,c. full version \$3) Many many awards. Excellent tool for teaching letter formation and early letter names / phonetic sounds. Kids can easily use it independently. Verbal prompts for correct letter formation, and educationally sound reinforcement. Can trace with finger to teach distal point, or can use stylus to introduce ‘pencil’. A good tool for building independent task completion. Washington Post declared it ‘one of the best apps for special needs kids’
- **ABC Tracer:** One of my favorite free apps for early literacy learners. Again, besides building skills of tracing letters and numbers, this app includes sound/letter association, practice on initial sounds in words, and early word recognition. Works well with minimal adult support.
- **Writing Wizard:** new. About \$5. Allows teacher to import word lists (spelling words) so student can practice their letter formation in context. Adapted instruction for left handed writers. Creates a report on what the student has done right and wrong. Can export writing to show parents. Kind of breakthrough.
- **Writing Wizard Cursive:** About \$5. Same as above, only in cursive. Much more fun for older kids than just rewriting their spelling words.
- **Handwriting Heroes:** new; lower case only; designed by an OT; 3 levels of difficulty – pre K, kindergarten, elementary. Teaches letter formation in a multisensory way. Letters are grouped into families based on the way the letter starts: ‘bouncers: down, up, and over’, ‘skiers: ski diagonally down’
- **Writing Magic Letters :** about \$1.99. Different from other letter writing / tracing apps in that, rather than working through the alphabet, letters that have similar motor strokes are grouped together (l, t, l, f) and (o, a, e, c). Designed around a ‘gimick’ that encourages writing, reading, and problem solving. Set in a medieval castle. Student is wizard’s assistant. When the child correctly traces / writes a certain number of letters, he earns a spell. The spells can be collected to solve problems and help people in the castle. Verbal praise is throughout (British accent). If child traces inaccurately, after several trials, tutorial. Disadvantages: only lower case letters; teacher cannot control what letters will be worked on.
- **Little Writer:** Free. Tracing upper and lower case, shapes, numbers, and words. One item per page, so visually clean. A cartoon character or vehicle appears where the child is to start tracing. More cars / characters appear along the line as child traces. Verbal praise (“Way to go!” etc) during the task. Frequent reinforcement of name of letter / number, etc. (“you wrote a 3!”)
- **ABC Cards** (changes name often): Fair. Don’t use. OK practice tool to keep a lower functioning student interested in writing. Not great because target is fairly small and student gets same reinforcement for tracing way off the mark. Phonics aspect is very adult dependent. Focuses mostly on capital letters.

For students who need help writing complete, well organized sentences:

- **Jumbled Sentences (10 different apps for different types of need, all free):** Good for some students, but Lots of distracting auditory and visual. Background music that you can’t eliminate. Words circle as student drags them into boxes to order them into a good sentence. Good reinforcement when student organizes into correct sentence, but students with ASD may be so overstimulated by all the sound and movement that the final reinforcement for correct sentence doesn’t mean much.
- **Sentence Builder for IPad** (Mobile Education Store) about \$6. Fun and good app; elementary and teen versions; good for learning to develop grammatically correct sentences; specific attention to connector words (conjunctions, articles, auxiliary verbs, etc that make up 80% of the English language!!!) I would use this as a

tool to break down sentence building. Spin to create a sentence, verbally rehearse, then write or type. Has its own data collection system to track progress!! Lots of schools are using this one.

- **Sentence Builder for Teens:** excellent and age appropriate
- **Sentence Builder Free (Abitalk):** for K, 1, 2; the free version gives you a few slides; for \$3 you get lots of slides; Format is a center picture surrounded by words. Kids organize the words into sentences. You can fully customize this with your own vocab and pics; be aware – frequently crashes. Also, has some in app purchases

For kids who hate to write, whether it's daily journaling, creative writing, reports, whatever. Use the iPad as a supplemental tool. You can accomplish the same teaching task, but often without the refusal to write.

- **Tell about This:** Free for lite version (one prompt in each category), \$3 for 100 prompts. Really a prewriting tool. Kids brainstorm and record their stories. They CAN type, but the focus is really on thinking, remembering, organizing thoughts, and describing.
- **Write about This:** Free version has 50 prompts. A lot for a free app. \$4 for 375 prompts. Lots of awards. My favorite teacher quote is, "I couldn't get the kids to stop writing at the end of the day." Aligned with standards; search content based on curriculum, interest, season, or theme. Level options based on learning theory.
- **WriteReader Classroom:** free. Designed for ages 3 – 10. A breakthrough app. Student writes a sentence using his current level of language. He uses a specially designed keyboard which includes letters and their sounds. Teachers 'translate' student writing into traditional spelling.
- **Writer's Studio:** really good for journaling, especially for older kids. Can type or use voice recording. Kids can create books and add photos or clipart. Now has text to speech, so kids can hear their stories read aloud (editing and correct possibilities) Share book through email, \$4
- **60 Story Starters:** by Webber. About \$2 (recently reduced from \$4). Much like the Webber picture cards. Kids can either type their ideas or record their ideas and then write them later. Teacher can choose item to teach and collect data on: beginning / middle / end, or setting / characters, or sentence length and construction. Keeps data on student progress.
- **Punctuation End Marks:** \$4. Officer Period, Detective Question Mark, and Sargent Exclamation Mark. Lots of activities and opportunities to practice punctuation in a fun format. Has had glitches. Watch reviews.

Four apps for kids who struggle with notetaking. Primarily for High School, Aspergers kids: each of these apps has different bells and whistles. Experiment until you find one that helps your particular student:

- **Notability:** recently raised price from \$3 to \$9. pretty amazing for notetaking; full keyboard with all function features, lots of options for handwriting / scribing; ability to import class notes, etc, in pdf format, highlighters to mark keywords; full audio capability to record lectures; syncs to Dropbox or the cloud; Students can send completed homework to teacher via the Cloud. excellent reviews
- **Smart Writing Tool-7 Notes (Free version available, but may be disappearing. Keep checking Now \$8):** A breakthrough app for folks with terrible handwriting. State of the art handwriting recognition tool. Student scribes with his finger. App provides several tools for converting that writing into digital text. Word prediction is included with both scribing and typing.
- **WritePad:** \$5. A new one also developing handwriting recognition. Learns to recognize even poor handwriting, and quickly transcribes it into digital print. Look for more reviews. Most recent reviews don't think it is as good as Smart Writing Tool above.
- **Evernote:** best known, partly because it's Free! Super Bowl commercial – elephant flying through the air. Considered one of the New York Times 10 Must Have apps. Excellent for notetaking. Has been buggy and slow in the past, but recent updates apparently have fixed this. One of the reviewers says he sits in a class, records the lecture, takes a picture of the whiteboard, and syncs everything to Evernote for viewing later. One of those apps that has more features than most kids would need.

For kids who don't write down their homework assignments:

- **My Homework:** free! Good to use as assignment notebook; or a homework planner, or a class schedule calendar; can see all homework on one screen; allows you to organize into three categories: upcoming, late, and completed; sends push notifications so you know if you have something due the next day;

extra bonus: my Homework is also available on the web so you can quickly sync and access your homework from your computer at www.myhomeworkapp.com

- **StickyNotes (also called Notefuly):** about \$1; good for kids with organization challenges; over 3 million users; visual notes with alarms for reminders; besides homework, can be used for ADL reminders

Now a few for younger writers. For kids who struggle with the language aspects of writing:

- **StoryBuilder for iPad:** now about \$8; This is a pretty sophisticated app with several educational applications (looks like it was designed by an SLP) ; designed specifically to help with paragraph formation, integration of ideas, and learning to improve higher level abstractions by inference; extensive use of audio clips which are specifically designed to help audition processing for kids with ASD. Consistently high reviews. Coming this summer: teenager modules for Storybuilder; kids can record their own voices. Very SLP friendly; good for wh questions, story sequencing, inferences, predictions, etc.
- **Story Wheel:** (I actually like this, but I'm going to give mostly bad review) free; Good aspects – really fun, kids spin 'roulette' wheel and get a picture prompt for the next part of the story; they record each segment of the story, and hear the whole story back at the end. Teacher can incorporate various teaching goals – like starting each new sentence with a transition word. Bad aspects – requires adult prompting for kids to formulate ideas and sentences, no real writing function – you have to devise some sort of writing scaffold later, also, each story must be 12 pages long. Often too long.

For kids who need help with organizing their ideas (especially for oral presentations) state standards:

- **Popplet:** Popplet Lite only allows one page of popplets. Try it with a student to see if it works for him before buying full version. Can be used for class presentation with imported pictures, audio recording,

For kids who have motor challenges:

- **Motor Positioning options:** don't assume that all kids can effectively use the iPad at their desks; also don't assume that kids with really poor motor skills can't access it. (tell of iPod Touch in our Lifeskills classes). Lots of adaptive tools – some expensive, some not.
- **SnapType:** Free version is great. Pro version costs \$5 and has a few more options (can make lined paper, can change color of paper, unlimited worksheets allowed). I think this is the most important app I'm showing you today. Take a picture of a worksheet with iPad. Tap anywhere on the worksheet and the student can type in his answer. Can save his completed worksheet and send to teacher.

For kids who have to create a bibliography or references (OR FOR US!!)

- **EasyBib:** free; scan barcode or type name of book and it will give you MLA, APA, Chicago style citations

Another one for us:

- **Kid in Story BookMaker:** Social stories made east!!

For kids who have an assignment to write a book report (for teachers or parents):

- **Kids Book Report** \$1; very nice; good scaffolding system; visually, can set it up so kid sees one thing at a time, or all at once; toolbar is very kid friendly. Good focus on setting, characters, main idea, solution, etc; app can convert book report into pdf and share via email. If I were the parent of a child with ASD and my child had a book report assignment, I would definitely invest the \$1 for this app.

For kids who have an assignment to create and present a project to the class:

- **Educreations:** free for now, but too good to stay free – every review is excellent; turns your iPad into a whiteboard; allows your student a visual way to create a project / report to share with the class; record your own voice, handwrite, or keyboard; lots of options for drawing and importing pictures; create a free account on www.educreations.com and choose who can see your project; lots of people also use this app for notetaking and recording lectures; teachers can use this app to send interactive lessons to students. Good for homebound students, too. Great for priming – teacher can make preview of upcoming lesson and send by email to parents