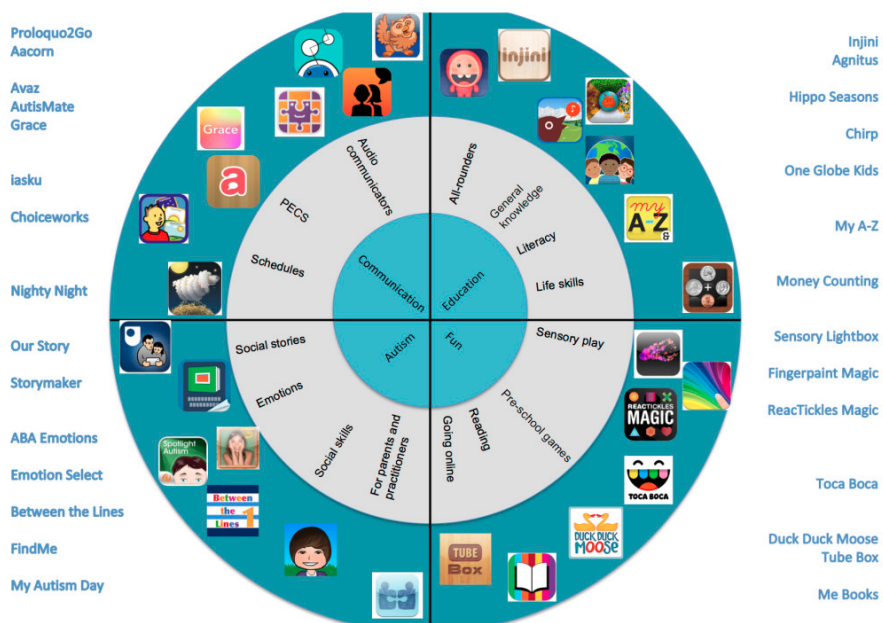




App Reviews

This library of app reviews is organised alphabetically by app name and updated with about half a dozen new reviews each month. In addition the wheel below (last updated December 2013) summarises the most recommended reviewed apps by type. Please [contact us](#) if you would like to submit a guest review or request a review of a specific app.



Click on each review image to see it in more detail.

Group review of a series of best-selling **augmented and aided communication (AAC) apps for the iPad**. Apps selected as the top six bestselling apps following a search on iTunes for "autism communication", excluding free apps, and selecting only those apps which include audio content. All are designed to be used as a 'voice' for people with limited or no speech and are appropriate for children or adults.

| | Proloquo2Go | Speak for Yourself | TouchChat HD | iMyVoice | TASUC Communication | Words on Wheels | |
|---|------------------------------|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| BASIC | Version | 3.0 | 1.3.1 | 1.3.3 | 2.2 | 1.1.3 | 1.2 |
| | Price | £129.99 | £139.99 | £199.99 | £27.99 | £14.99 | £6.99 |
| | Device | iPad | iPad | iPad | iPad | iPad | iPad |
| | Developer | Assistiveware | Speak for Yourself | Salttillo Corporation | Simona Tzalik | Info Lounge LLC | Excel Heritage Grp |
| DESIGN | Look & Feel | ★★★★ | ★★★ | ★★ | ★ | ★★★★★ | ★★★ |
| | Accessibility | ★★★★★ | ★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★ | ★★ |
| | Fun | ★★ | ★★ | ★★ | ★★ | ★★ | ★★ |
| FUNCTION | Autism-specificity | ●● | ● | ●●●● | ●●●● | ●●●● | ●●● |
| | Learning potential | ● | ● | ●●● | ●● | ●●●● | ● |
| | Evidence base | ● | ● | ● | ● | ●● | ● |
| | Special features | Buckets of personalisation options; large vocab; plenty of support materials; need to learn layout. | Small buttons with fussy images; clever 'Babble' setting to simplify vocab; vocab nested cleverly | Automatically introduces grammar; lacks control over speech output; limited content but can add more | Basic vocab w. no sentence building options; can create own image boards and record audio | Useful drag and drop feature; restrictions on sentence output; encourages social communication | Very colourful but too busy; limited vocab and can only create sentences up to five items. |
| BEST FOR... | All-rounder, personalisation | Nested vocab system | Modelling correct grammar | Simplicity; making new vocab boards | Looks & PECS-style | Price | |
| WORST FOR... | Challenging navigation | Small buttons | Range of vocabulary, price | Images, sentence complexity | Flexible communication | Accessibility: layout too busy | |
| Comments: evidence for using audio-AAC for children with autism who have the physical means to speak is in short supply. Any adoption of AAC for this group should be discussed with their speech & language therapist, teachers and so on. The apps share two main flaws – the digital voices deliver phrases in an awkward intonation that provides a poor model for people with autism who may already struggle with intonation, pitch and timing of speech. Also the apps are mostly designed for users who have a high level of vocabulary and knowledge of grammar and do not provide options such as changing word order. | | | | | | | |

Group review of a series of best-selling augmented and aided communication (AAC) apps for the iPad. [Follow this link for screenshots of each of these apps](#).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--------|
| App name: | Agnitus | Version: | 1.7.2 |
| Link: | www.agnitus.com | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Teaches pre-school skills in games; colours, shapes, memory, number, letters etc. | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | Children aged about 3-6 years old or equivalent ability level, starts off easy | Device: | iPad |
| Look & feel rating: lovely graphics and sounds | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: general pre-school app, eyes a bit goggly? | ● |
| Accessibility: instant access, visual cues and audio | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: relevant skills, good clues when stuck | ●●●● |
| Fun: lots to do, cheerful rewards and gold stars | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: based on an 'actual curriculum' but where from? | ●● |
| Overall: | The app unlocks new games as your child gets more competent and you can download report cards to monitor activity and progress. These could be unsettling if parents fear their child isn't doing well. The app is jolly and packed with free content and you can buy more. | | |

Agnitus: a great all rounder with loads of content addressing early education targets like number and letter recognition

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--------------|
| App name: | ANDDS: Autism n Developmental Disorder Screening | Version: | 1.0.3 |
| Link: | www.webteamcorp.com | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | App-based screening tool which asks the adult user about autism-related delays in a child | Price: | Free, but... |
| Who is it for? | For parents with concerns about a child under 36 months | Device: | All Apple |
| Look & feel rating: images to illustrate each question | ★★★★ | Autism specificity: just screens for ASD | ●●●● |
| Accessibility: surprisingly hard to use! | ★ | Learning potential: no learning content | |
| Fun: not intended for fun. Some wording actively negative (see below) | | Evidence base: created w doctors, from existing screens | ●● |
| Overall: | This comprehensive app provides regular opportunities to screen a child at specific ages (8, 12, 15, 18, 21 and 24-36 months) for signs of behaviours often associated with autism. There are no data (yet) on how specific or sensitive this tool is – i.e. it might over or under identify children who warrant further attention. Parents are stung with a £2.99 subscription fee to get test results. Wording of questions is variable, often good but sometimes open to interpretation: "Is your child in their own little world?", or unaccepting: "Does your child have temper tantrums for no reason?". Produces an outcome of Green, Yellow or Red suggesting "alert". Wording of the Red outcome is good and advises consultation with a doctor. But the Yellow outcome says "you need to keep an eye on their progress and play with them more" – raising the unwanted spectre of the "refrigerator mother." Not recommended. | | |

ANDDS – an autism screening app. The delivery is OK but I have concerns about the entire concept of this.

| | | | |
|--|---|---|-----------|
| App name: | Autism Apps | Version: | 2.3 |
| Link: | touchautism.com | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Provides a searchable list of apps "being used with and by people with autism" | Price: | free |
| Who is it for? | Probably mostly parents, teachers and professionals using apps to support people with autism | Device: | All Apple |
| Look & feel rating: clean, useable interface | ★★★★ | Autism specificity: apps 'being used by' ASD community | ●●●●● |
| Accessibility: for adult users. Can send emails, link to reviews etc. | ★ | Learning potential: supports access to apps | ● |
| Fun: functional | ★ | Evidence base: references reviews but no research evidence | ●● |
| Overall: | Useful resource for searching for autism apps, with links to external reviews and resources. Unclear how apps are selected for inclusion in the first place, and organised into categories. Would benefit from options to search by (e.g.) age range or ability of intended user. | | |

Autism Apps: useful searchable list of autism apps

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|--|--|--|--------|
| App name: | AutisMate | Version: | 2.0.2 |
| Link: | http://www.autismate.com/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Aims to improve social, communication and adaptive behaviours in people with autism of all ages | Price: | £99.99 |
| Who is it for? | People with autism of any age who need communication support or help developing independence | Device: | iPad |
| Look & feel rating: visuals OK but poor default digital voice | ★★★★ | Autism specificity: good, autism-specific design | ●●●●● |
| Accessibility: like all AAC needs a bit of practice | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: some positive, anecdotal reports | ●●●● |
| Fun: mostly functional, but some rewards within visual schedules | ★★★ | Evidence base: inspired by research findings but untested | ●● |
| Overall: | This app combines principles from research on social stories, video modelling and AAC design, to support life skills, manage routines, and communicate. Hotspots embedded in real scenes organise content (e.g. guidance on how to behave in class, within a classroom scene.) Loads of personalisation options & the makers run webinars to support users. However , grand claims have been made about this app which have NOT been independently validated. I remain dubious about its "revolutionary" billing and associated hype. | | |

AutisMate: social skills, communication and life skills all addressed in this ambitious app which remains to be formally evaluated.

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---------------------------|
| App name: | Autism iHelp app range including: Play, Wh-questions, Language Concepts, Colours, Opposites, Same & Different, Sorting, Shapes, Home, Home 2, Food, Animals, Vehicles, Sounds | Version: | Various, nearly all 1.0.0 |
| Link: | https://www.facebook.com/AutismiHelp | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | A whole family of apps helping children with autism learn new words (spoken and written) and testing this knowledge with simple matching and sorting games. | Price: | Free - £1.99 |
| Who is it for? | Children with autism learning to read, or wanting practice to match words to images and concepts. | Device: | Apple & some on Android |
| Look & feel rating: Simple, uncluttered, archetypal images | ★★★★ | Autism specificity: pleasingly repetitive structure | ●●●● |
| Accessibility: In-app purchases very easy to make | ★ | Learning potential: could support new word learning | ●● |
| Fun: Unexciting verbal rewards –turned off if remove audio clues | ★ | Evidence base: none apparent, simple learning structure | ● |
| Overall: | These apps all follow the same simple, effective learning structure of repeated exposure to novel content (new written words, pictures and audio) followed by a test phase using matching or sorting. These apps offer limited content but are individually low-priced to fit. The free apps contain only even less content – normally a vocabulary set of 8 items only – and it is disconcertingly easy to make additional in-app purchases (though each free app only has one so this can't escalate). The apps record the child's progress in simple report format which can be re-set but not downloaded or emailed. Each game includes plenty of options to change presentation style and indirectly alter how difficult games are (e.g. turn off audio, increase or decrease number of answer options, remove text labels or images), though you can't stop a learning array or game once it is started except by exiting the app. | | |

Autism iHelp App Range: very simple apps covering a range of educational topics but rather overpriced for what you get.

| | | | |
|--|---|---|-------------|
| App name: | Between the Lines: Level 1, Level 2 and Advanced | Version: | All 1.3 |
| Link: | http://www.hamaguchiapps.com and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRy4QF1E1Y8 | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Three games to learn about: emotions in faces and speech; body language; metaphorical language | Price: | £10.99 each |
| Who is it for? | People with autism or other difficulties with understanding emotions and pragmatic language | Device: | All Apple |
| Look & feel rating: simple layout but not very attractive | ★★★★ | Autism specificity: games highly relevant, rewards less so | ●●●● |
| Accessibility: younger kids will need help setting up | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: realistic content links to real world | ●●●●● |
| Fun: Some reward games a bit too difficult? | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: developed by speech & language therapist | ●● |
| Overall: | Three apps for different aged players (children, older children, adolescents & adults) and Lite versions available for 69p each. Loads of content which can be played by multiple players or groups (good for schools & therapists). Records data which can be emailed or saved. Multiple options for playing (e.g. play one game or switch between games) and rewards. | | |

Between the Lines: great apps, good value for money especially for multiple users

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|---|---|---|-----------|
| App name: | Avaz – AAC app for autism | Version: | 2.1 |
| Link: | www.avazapp.com good website with useful support materials | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Augmented and aided communication specifically designed for autistic users | Price: | £69.99 |
| Who is it for? | Non-verbal people with autism, and others with related profiles | Device: | iPad only |
| Look & feel rating: the usual very minimal graphics and layout | ★★★★ | Autism specificity: designed as such but actually generic AAC | ●● |
| Accessibility: much easier to navigate than most | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: can sign up for newsletter with therapist tips | ●● |
| Fun: as with all AAC apps, fun isn't really the point | ★ | Evidence base: uses "research-based" vocab but no efficacy data | ●● |
| Overall: | Despite fairly modest rankings above, and my reservations on AAC use at all (see http://www.dart.ed.ac.uk/using-audio-communicator-apps-with-people-with-autism/) I think this is the best AAC-type app I've seen so far. It is much better value for money than most, and includes a number of useful navigation features including a 'quick' page for useful phrases such as "I need the toilet" or "I want to spell". There are specific buttons for "I made a mistake" and an alert call for immediate attention. For parents or supporters 'sessions' can be tracked and downloaded as reports and the app can be personalised and then backed-up to Dropbox. Statements can be auto-posted to Twitter, Facebook or sent in emails providing encouragement for social communication, not just requests. Like all AAC apps I've seen, it suffers from not being able to move symbols around once loaded into the top bar but on the whole this is a very good example of the type. | | |

AVAZ – One of the better AAC apps for autism, I reckon. And more affordable too. CORRECTION: also available for Android

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--------|
| App name: | Cause and Effect Sensory Light Box | Version: | 2.0.4 |
| Link: | www.cognable.com | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Simple light and sound responses to touch (or sound) input: graphic cause and effect display | Price: | |
| Who is it for? | Children and adults with additional support needs, especially complex learning difficulties | Device: | |
| Look & feel rating: very pretty, simple, good sounds | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: not specific but would be a hit with many | ●● |
| Accessibility: incredibly easy to use | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: some cause & effect + touchscreen skills | ●●●● |
| Fun: entrancing and compelling – lots of variety | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: research led developer | ●●●● |
| Overall: | Lovely app to teach touchscreen interaction skills and the notion of cause and effect to those with limited comprehension of these. Lots of useful sensitivity settings and options including switch compatibility. Helpful guidance to choose settings for different users too. Well reviewed online. | | |







Cause & Effect Sensory Lightbox – does what it says on the tin!

| | | | |
|--|--|---|-----------|
| App name: | Chirp! Bird Songs of Britain (<i>other regions available</i>) | Version: | 2.1.2 |
| Link: | www.spinysoft.co.uk | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Describes bird songs and calls for species found in your country | Price: | £1.99 |
| Who is it for? | Anyone, but perhaps not real bird-watching pros | Device: | All Apple |
| Look & feel rating: high quality images and audio | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: not at all | ● |
| Accessibility: requires reading except for slideshow | ★★★★ | Learning potential: good - includes quiz setting | ●●●● |
| Fun: depends whether you like birds or not! | ★★★★ | Evidence base: None, but makes no claims | ● |
| Overall: | This is another app I'm reviewing for its potential to help people with autism learn some general knowledge. Although bird-watching is a cliché, this is an electronic collection which I think could be very appealing to some autistic people. It is essentially an encyclopaedia of bird songs, which can be sorted in multiple ways (e.g. type of call, type of bird, alphabetical). There is a built in quiz setting with varying difficulty levels and a fantastic slideshow option with soothing birdsong and images. The app is also available for North America and this "British" version in reality covers most of Europe with multiple geographic regions and languages supported. | | |
















Chirp! Bird songs of Britain – an interesting app for developing general knowledge about the natural world

| | | | |
|--|---|--|-----------|
| App name: | Choiceworks – visual support system with schedule, feelings and waiting | Version: | 3.1 |
| Link: | www.beevisual.com | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Picture-based tool to support learning of routines, manage emotions and develop waiting skills | Price: | £2.99 |
| Who is it for? | Non-verbal or pre-verbal young people needing day-to-day support and wanting more independence | Device: | All Apple |
| Look & feel rating: nice images, clunky audio | ★★★★ | Autism specificity: designed by parents of son w ASN | ●●●● |
| Accessibility: needs to be set-up by parent but then good | ★★★★ | Learning potential: may help promote life skills | ●●●● |
| Fun: Supports independence which can be v rewarding | ★★★ | Evidence base: parent-made with professional consultation | ●● |
| Overall: | Really useful app with lots of personalisation options, simple to use for kids wanting to get more independence and parents wanting to make sure they don't forget to clean their teeth! Images not too babyish so could be used as children get older too. | | |







Choiceworks: simple but comprehensive app for scheduling and promoting independent skills

| | | | |
|---|---|------------------|-----------|
| App name: | Fingerpaint Magic | Version: | 1.2 |
| Link: | www.meritumsoft.com | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Fingerpainting! – abstract colours for a lovely sensory, expressive experience | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | Create beautiful, colourful images on your iPad or iPhone | Device: | All apple |
| Look & feel rating: stunning  Autism specificity: no, but has a lovely sensory feel  | | | |
| Accessibility: in-app purchase not locked - easy to use  Learning potential: no, but great for self-expression  | | | |
| Fun: creative, attractive, motivation to play is intrinsic  Evidence base: none, no claims made  | | | |
| Overall: | Use this app to paint or colour on top of existing photos in your library. Change the paintbrush and colour settings for a range of different effects. Not good for representational art – much more abstract and expressive. Easy to produce impressive results. | | |

Fingerpaint Magic: simple sensory app to encourage artistic self-expression

| Comparative review of top-five selling autism emotion training apps on iTunes, reviewed by Sue Fletcher-Watson, September 2013 | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|--|--|---|--|---|
| | | Autism Emotion modelmekids.com | EmotionX Dunedin Multimedia Ltd | Emotions & Feelings autism social story Touch Autism | Emotion Select 2Brainy Inc | ABA Flash Cards & Games – Emotions Innovative Mobile Apps Ltd |
| BASIC | Version | 1.1 | 3.1 | 2.3 | 1.3 | 4.2 |
| | Price | Free | 69p | £1.99 | £1.99 | Free |
| | Device | All Apple | All Apple | All Apple | iPad | All Apple |
| | Suitable for... | 2 – 6 years | Older kids & teens; readers | All ages | Readers | Children of all ages |
| DESIGN | Look & Feel | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★★★ | ★★★★ |
| | Accessibility | ★★★★ | ★★ | ★★★★★ | ★★ | ★★★★ |
| | Fun | ★★ | ★★★ | ★★ | ★★★ | ★★ |
| FUNCTION | Autism-specificity |  |  |  |  |  |
| | Learning potential |  |  |  |  |  |
| | Evidence base |  |  |  |  |  |
| FEATURES | Personalisation | None | None | Can use audio or read the words yourself | None | Lots of presentation & layout settings |
| | Special features | Little song about the emotion at the end of each story | Uses very adult CG images so great for teens or older kids. | Just one social story introducing a range of basic emotions | Game-structure, not just browsing images. You can save data and map progress. | Can 'favourite' emotion cards to create a personal list |
| FINAL JUDGEMENT | | Just 4 short emotion stories with images, text & audio. Clear and simple, but minimal content. | Not sure about the accuracy of all of the facial expressions! Covers a wide range of complex emotions. | Simple, but minimal content for the price. Imagery good for a range of ages. | Nice graphics which show moving faces not just static expressions. Good game structure. Only 5 emotions. | Large library of basic and complex emotions with clear images. Simple flashcard structure with audio. |
| All apps have been rated 2 for evidence-base. There is good evidence for the difficulty many autistic people have with understanding and recognising emotions and for the social story format used by <i>Autism Emotion</i> and by <i>Emotions and Feelings</i> . However none of these apps have their own independent research basis. A common problem is that apps cover only a narrow range of basic emotions and simultaneously require skills like reading. Simple emotions should be taught using basic interfaces while a complex interface should address emotional complexity as well. | | | | | | |

Group review of a series of best-selling emotion trainer apps for the iPad.

| | | | |
|--|--|------------------|-----------|
| App name: | Grace – picture exchange for non-verbal people | Version: | 2.0.3 |
| Link: | http://www.graceapp.com/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Basically a mobile app version of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) | Price: | £17.49 |
| Who is it for? | Children with communication disorders who are pre-verbal or using single words | Device: | All Apple |
| Look & feel rating: lovely drawings, can use own pics  Autism specificity: made by mother of autistic child  | | | |
| Accessibility: instant access, but requires instruction  Learning potential: good, mimics PECS, requires showing  | | | |
| Fun: more functional than fun  Evidence base: good evidence for PECS  | | | |
| Overall: | Good communication app, for anyone who wants PECS on their phone. Limited array of symbols in the reviewed version, but can add more. Latest version has multiple languages. Requires child to show the screen to their communication partner, which emphasises social interaction | | |

Grace: essentially PECS on a phone.

| | | | |
|--|---|------------------|---------|
| App name: | Green Day | Version: | 1.5 |
| Link: | https://play.google.com/store/apps/developer?id=Applied+Autism | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Provides a way to implement ABA therapy or behavioural intervention systems on a tablet or phone | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | Parents or therapists using ABA therapies with pre-verbal children | Device: | Android |
| Look & feel rating: quite awkwardly laid out and hard to use ★ | | | |
| Autism specificity: designed for children doing ABA therapy ●●●● | | | |
| Accessibility: audio reinforcement, but not intuitive, small icons ★★ | | | |
| Learning potential: by structuring rules and reinforcement ●●●● | | | |
| Fun: no built-in reinforcements apart from simple audio ★★ | | | |
| Evidence base: ABA evidence published but shaky ●● | | | |
| Overall: | I found this app hard to understand and quite sticky on my Samsung Galaxy. Need to be familiar with ABA structures to use it. Can personalise with your own child's photo and name and use with up to 3 children, but no built in rewards or long-term recording of achievements. | | |

Green Day: tricky to use but might be an effective tool for committed ABA-ers

| | | | |
|---|--|------------------|-----------|
| App name: | Hippo Seasons | Version: | 1.3 |
| Link: | http://www.hippotrix.com/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Lets very young children explore the seasons | Price: | £1.99 |
| Who is it for? | Toddlers, pre-schoolers, or equivalent ability level. | Device: | iPad only |
| Look & feel rating: beautiful, suitable for adults ★★★★★ | | | |
| Autism specificity: mainstream app, but v appealing ● | | | |
| Accessibility: immediate access, simple, but small buttons ★★★★★ | | | |
| Learning potential: for basic general knowledge ●●●● | | | |
| Fun: yes, and soothing ★★★★★ | | | |
| Evidence base: none, but no claims made ● | | | |
| Overall: | Some parents asked me recently about how to help young and minimally-verbal children with autism learn some basic general knowledge. Here is one way to do just that with this attractive and simple app to explore the four seasons. The app is highly interactive using tap, swipe and shake functions to interact with four seasonal garden scenes. Players can take a picture to share with friends. The grown-up graphics mean this is a rare example of an app which could be used by teenagers and adults with intellectual disabilities. | | |

Hippo Seasons: lovely accessible app for fun and general knowledge about the world

| | | | |
|---|--|------------------|-----------|
| App name: | How to Make Lifelong Friends | Version: | 1.0 |
| Link: | www.appwarrior.com | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | An e-book purporting to explain in 15 short chapters how to get and keep friends | Price: | £1.99 |
| Who is it for? | Targeted at people who are unhappy about their lack of friends and want more | Device: | All apple |
| Look & feel rating: simple, plain, can adjust text size ★★★★★ | | | |
| Autism specificity: patronising and simplifies social difficulties | | | |
| Accessibility: easy to read, no audio version available ★★★★★ | | | |
| Learning potential: might improve confidence? ● | | | |
| Fun: just an e-book ★ | | | |
| Evidence base: none, but no claims made | | | |
| Overall: | I am reviewing this because someone asked me whether I thought it was suitable for people with autism. The app is a short e-book describing in chapters such as "Talk to Strangers" and "Don't be a Fair Weather Friend" how to 'make lifelong friends'. My impression is that adults and adolescents with have autism, assuming that they were dissatisfied with their social life and looking for guidance, would find this deeply patronising and simplistic. I find it hard to imagine who would benefit from this guidance. | | |

How to Make Lifelong Friends - an e-book for adolescents / adults with guidance on making friends

| | | | |
|--|--|------------------|--------|
| App name: | I AM autism expressions | Version: | 1.0 |
| Link: | @Mia_Williamson | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Matches drawings of facial expressions with words and situations | Price: | 69p |
| Who is it for? | Specifically designed for children with autism | Device: | iPad |
| Look & feel rating: simple, faces not always very clear ★ | | | |
| Autism specificity: designed for this group ●●●● | | | |
| Accessibility: easy to use but requires good reading ★★ | | | |
| Learning potential: only features 7 emotions ●● | | | |
| Fun: no rewards or sound effects ★★ | | | |
| Evidence base: called for testers on twitter ●● | | | |
| Overall: | This app uses drawings of faces with text to teach people how emotions match with facial expressions and scenarios. It uses text instructions throughout but only introduces 7 very basic emotions - I think people able to access the app would want practice at a much subtler level of emotional complexity. Some faces are hard to interpret and in the 'Scenarios' setting there are occasions when all four of the possible face options produce a 'correct' answer. Needs some development to make it hang together better. | | |

I Am Autism Expressions - emotion trainer app which needs further development

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|--|---|--|--------|
| App name: | iasku | Version: | 1.1 |
| Link: | www.webdesigncompany.co.uk / www.iasku.co.uk | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Digital communication system similar to the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) | Price: | £2.99 |
| Who is it for? | Non-verbal or pre-verbal people with ASD: aims to teach interpersonal communicative acts | Device: | Apple |
| Look & feel rating: attractive and simple, very clear | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: not just a generic communicator | ●●●●● |
| Accessibility: a little complex considering the proposed user | ★★★★ | Learning potential: interpersonal aspects of language | ●●●●● |
| Fun: like all communicators, more functional than fun | ★★★ | Evidence base: built by clinical professionals | ●●●●● |
| Overall: | Simple app which supports request-making only ("I want X") but in narrowing the focus down to this essential communicative act increases relevance for those with ASD. Customisable using the device camera. No audio content – requires the user to show the screen to their communication partner. The low price reflects a small vocabulary but this is a great starter app for children just beginning to use PECS. | | |

iasku - a communicator app based on PECS-principles for non-verbal or minimally-verbal children

| | | | |
|--|--|--|-----------|
| App name: | Injini | Version: | 1.3 |
| Link: | http://www.injini.net/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Almost anything! Twelve games including puzzles, matching, memory, fine-motor skills, letter learning. Each game has 9 levels of difficulty. Incidental language and colour learning too. | Price: | £20.99 |
| Who is it for? | Children with additional support needs of all kinds, from about 2 years age-equivalent | Device: | iPad only |
| Look & feel rating: very attractive and well laid out | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: just a great app for pre-school / ASN | ●● |
| Accessibility: tutorial for each game, easy access | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: focuses on relevant executive functions | ●●●●● |
| Fun: lots to do and gentle learning curve, nice music | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: extensively field tested | ●●●●● |
| Overall: | A really attractive app which focuses on executive functions like memory and planning, and on fine motor skills, as well as academic learning. Not cheap but loads and loads of content and accessible from a very young age / ability level. Great to see a letters game that uses phonetic sounds! | | |

Injini: another all round educational app which could well help develop some key skills from fine motor to memory and planning.

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| App name: | Itsy Bitsy Spider – by Duck Duck Moose | Version: | 1.1.1 |
| Link: | http://www.duckduckmoose.com/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Interactive scenes inspired by the nursery rhyme, entertainment with some fun facts | Price: | £1.49 |
| Who is it for? | Pre-schoolers from infancy to about 4 years old, no language required | Device: | Apple & Android |
| Look & feel rating: really gorgeous looking | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: just a really fun pre-school app | ● |
| Accessibility: intro screen, thereafter easy access | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: facts go over most players' heads? | ●●●●● |
| Fun: loads to do and lovely music too | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: developed with parents and children | ●●●●● |
| Overall: | Like other apps made by this excellent developer, Itsy Bitsy is beautifully put together with attractive graphics, animations and music. You can press almost anywhere on the screen and something fun will happen. No right or wrong answers, just exploratory play. The fly character shares fun facts about the environment, but these are unlikely to mean much to most players of this app. | | |

Itsy Bitsy Spider – by Duck Duck Moose, lovely nursery-rhyme based interactive scenes for loads of fun.

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| App name: | Me Books and Ladybird Classic Me Books | Version: | 1.5 |
| Link: | http://www.mebooks.co/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Read favourite books, narrated by amazing performers with interactive illustrations | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | Children who love stories | Device: | All Apple |
| Look & feel rating: lovely, nice page-turn effects | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: no, but might be a hit with book-lovers | ●● |
| Accessibility: my 4 year old can use independently | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: inspire an interest in reading? | ●● |
| Fun: yes, inspires an interest in stories & reading | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: none, but makes no claims | ● |
| Overall: | This is a last in a series of reviews of apps for stories – making your own or (in this case) reading them. The app is free but you pay to download additional stories to create a library. Dozens of titles are available including well-loved characters like Peppa Pig and Charlie & Lola, as well as classic Ladybird books. The stories are narrated by an impressive cast of performers including Alan Davies, Josie Lawrence, and (my favourite) Adam Buxton. The stories are visually identical to their paper versions but have hot-spots on the illustrations which make them interactive too. Parents and children can replace the narration with their own audio or add hotspots. This app is wonderfully put together to allow a child to choose and 'read' their own stories independently and hopefully gain a love of books and a desire to read. | | |

MeBooks - promote engagement with reading and hold your child's favourite books in one place

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| App name: | Money Counting Pro | Version: | 1.0 |
| Link: | www.buyapp2day.com | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Practice using American coins, and adding their values together | Price: | 69p |
| Who is it for? | Children or young adults who want some practice with coins before using them for real | Device: | All Apple |
| Look & feel rating: ok, reward graphics not great | ★★★★ | Autism specificity: no, but could be useful | ●● |
| Accessibility: simple, drag functions a bit glitchy | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: good to have a chance to practice | ●●●● |
| Fun: rewards very basic and games uninteresting | ★★★ | Evidence base: none, and no claims made | ● |
| Overall: | This app has three money counting games using American coins - add them up to get the right answer in three different settings. You can also get the free version with just one game. It is great that children can now rehearse using money in a motivating way (i.e. computer game) as a step towards using money independently, but the rewards aren't great (applause, smiley face) and all three games are really just about adding up not, for example, getting the right change. But not bad at this low price. | | |

Money Counting - non-autism specific app to rehearse using American coins

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| App name: | My Autism Day | Version: | 1.2.1 |
| Link: | https://www.facebook.com/LittleAppHelpers | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Tracks behaviour, activities, goals, professional appointments and so on | Price: | £6.99 |
| Who is it for? | Parents who want to be able to closely monitor progress and record activity for their child with ASD | Device: | iPad |
| Look & feel rating: lovely graphics and style | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: it's in the name! | ●●●●● |
| Accessibility: for adult users, intuitive, good instructions | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: tracking rather than instruction | ●● |
| Fun: focus on progress and achievement somewhat unforgiving | ★ | Evidence base: lists eye-contact as a goal - is this an end in itself? | ● |
| Overall: | Very attractive and comprehensive app which I can see would help parents who want to keep detailed records across settings (e.g. nursery & home) - can share with other users and track multiple children. But emphasis on detailed observation and progress makes me uncomfortable. | | |







My Autism Day: good example of this kind of tracker app, if that's what you're looking for.

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| App name: | My A-Z | Version: | 1.2.0 |
| Link: | www.nightanddaystudios/apps/my-az | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Personalise the alphabet with audio and pictures for each letter, to help letter & word learning | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | Children learning words and letters, who would benefit from personalisation | Device: | All apple |
| Look & feel rating: nice graphics, v small letters | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: no, but highly relevant | ●●●● |
| Accessibility: swipe browsing but settings not locked | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: personalisation should help | ●●●●● |
| Fun: makes simple letter and word learning more fun | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: none, but mimics educational practice | ●● |
| Overall: | Really simple idea, well delivered in this attractive app. Add your own images, text and audio to each letter of the alphabet so your child can learn letters using their favourite / familiar words. E.g. take a picture of yourself for "D for Daddy" or "M for Mumy". You can add more than one image and word per letter - great for bilingual families. The easy-to-use personalisation provides extra support for learning which could be great for children with all kinds of additional support needs. | | |







My A-Z - great personalisable app for children learning their letters

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| App name: | Nighty Night! | Version: | 3.3.5 |
| Link: | http://www.goodbeans.com/products/nighty-night | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | An interactive bedtime book, focussing on turning off the lights before going to bed | Price: | £1.99 |
| Who is it for? | Pre-schoolers, pre-verbal children, parents struggling with children turning on the light at bedtime | Device: | All Apple |
| Look & feel rating: Oscar-winning artists and it shows! | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: relevant but generic pre-school app | ● |
| Accessibility: one simple start button, autoplay feature | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: might help encourage kids to keep the light off | ●● |
| Fun: simple, repetitive, interactive | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: none apparent | ● |
| Overall: | Very attractive, award-winning interactive book with audio. Child has to turn out the lights for all the animals on the farm before going to bed themselves. Doesn't cover any other aspects of the bedtime routine. Summer or winter functions distinguished by snow - but in real life summer the sun might still be up at kids' bedtime. | | |







Nighty Night!: interactive bedtime story to help with the sleep routine, especially turning the light off!

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| App name: | One Globe Kids | Version: | 1.1 |
| Link: | www.oneglobekids.com | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Learn about the lives and customs of children around the world | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | Children aged about 6 – 12 years old | Device: | All Apple |
| Look & feel rating: | nice layout, good images  | Autism specificity: | none  |
| Accessibility: | requires reading but has audio too  | Learning potential: | engaging and informative  |
| Fun: | 'Adventure' option to choose your own story  | Evidence base: | none, but no claims made  |
| Overall: | Another app being reviewed for its general knowledge potential. This app contains a cast of children from around the world. The app is free but children must be 'bought' as friends for £1.49 each. They are described as 'real' children but these are not live facebook-type connections and each 'friend' brings with them only a fixed set of content. That said, the content is high quality – stories about a day in the life of each child, in which the user can also select options to change the narrative. Also facts about different countries, and some basic language-learning stuff (e.g. counting to ten). There are only a handful of 'friends' available but more are in development. Good as an app to learn about other cultures but this is not a tool for inter-continental social networking. | | |







One Globe Kids: a way to learn about other cultures, good content but needs more of it!

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| App name: | Our Story | Version: | 1.0 |
| Link: | http://www.open.ac.uk/creet/main/projects/our-story | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Help children develop a passion for reading with fun games and activities | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | Young children pre-reading or just starting to read | Device: | Apple & Android |
| Look & feel rating: | clean, simple, attractive  | Autism specificity: | could be - for new readers  |
| Accessibility: | need adult help to get started  | Learning potential: | changes attitudes to reading  |
| Fun: | creative, makes reading stories more exotic  | Evidence base: | excellent, inc. intervention studies  |
| Overall: | Another free story maker app, this time available across Android and Apple platforms. This one has a grounding in psychological theory on reading development and has been evaluated extensively in literacy intervention studies all over the UK. It could be used to create social stories but it has been designed, and would work best, as an app for working with your child to help them form a narrative and develop an interest in reading and stories. If your child is not grabbed by paper books and/or has special interests this would be a great way to make a story starring their favourite toys. Recommended. | | |

OurStory – create a picture story and add your own text and audio with this great free app for all platforms

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| App name: | Piktoplus | Version: | 2.0 |
| Link: | www.piktoplus.com/en/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | AAC app using a 3-d personalised avatar within each pictogram | Price: | Free 30hr trial |
| Who is it for? | Minimally verbal users who might struggle to link images with real world actions | Device: | Android |
| Look & feel rating: | good avatars but interface not great  | Autism specificity: | might help w. known generalisation probs  |
| Accessibility: | very hard to navigate and counter-intuitive  | Learning potential: | as above, but otherwise like all AAC, unclear  |
| Fun: | like all AAC, not really about fun, but making an avatar is cool  | Evidence base: | again, avatars might help but no evidence yet  |
| Overall: | I had a huge amount of problems using this app on my Samsung galaxy tablet – for example loading the pictogram library when opening the app took minutes, and when I changed the language to English I was still left with a large amount of text in Spanish. Other translations were odd – the caption to a toileting pictogram was "clean the genitals". My review came to an end when the app crashed and I was told "Unfortunately Piktoplus has stopped". However there are some good features – the user can create a 3-d avatar of themselves who then features in every pictogram used. This should make it easier for the user to relate their own actions with those depicted in the app. It also has helpfully clear and un-prudish illustrations of going to the toilet, showering and so on. It supports multiple languages (sort of) and has a free 30-day trial option | | |

Piktoplus: clever idea for a personalised AAC app but some flaws

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| App name: | Piktopop | Version: | ? |
| Link: | www.piktoplus.com/en/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Touch screen game, might promote iPad skills | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | Young children (or equivalent ability level) | Device: | Android |
| Look & feel rating: | nice, simple graphics and rewards  | Autism specificity: | could be for any young child  |
| Accessibility: | Each games starts with a menu of written options  | Learning potential: | might be good for fine motor skills?  |
| Fun: | yes, quite addictive!  | Evidence base: | just for fun really  |
| Overall: | A fun game by the creators of Piktoplus. This doesn't seem to be very autism-specific but could be useful to help children who have never used a touchscreen device before get used to some of the basic cause and effect concepts. There are lots of options to make this game more or less challenging and more or less visually busy which is helpful. | | |

Piktopop - fun cause and effect game for Android devices

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| App name: | Rainbow Circles | Version: | 2 |
| Link: | https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.rainbow.circlemoving&hl=en_GB | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Supports relaxation and self-regulation using a soothing and engaging interface | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | Anyone, but designed with young children with autism in mind | Device: | Android 2.2 |
| Look & feel rating: attractive, simple graphics. | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: made for known self-regulation problems | ●●●●● |
| Accessibility: really easy to use with no instructions | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: no, but could be v useful | ●● |
| Fun: soothing and hypnotic | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: designed with experts | ●● |
| Overall: | *This app was designed by a colleague's student so I can't pretend to be unbiased.* This app is a really simple, colourful interface of moving circles which can be manipulated in various simple ways (e.g. changing size, locking together). The effect is soothing and relaxing, like an interactive screensaver. It is designed as a tool to help children undergoing emotional management problems to relax and regulate themselves, as well as a distraction when waiting. A demo video of the app was well reviewed by parents as being relevant to their children. | | |

Rainbow Circles – attractive, soothing research based app for self-regulation by people with autism

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| App name: | ReactTickles Magic | Version: | 1.0 |
| Link: | www.reacttickles.org | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Encourages simple sensory interaction, aiding self-expression and rewarding action of any kind | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | Anyone – especially those whose limited abilities prevent them from accessing most technology or art | Device: | iPad, PC, Mac |
| Look & feel rating: I think it is stunning! | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: designed with & for kids w ASD | ●●●●● |
| Accessibility: Starts with a menu but quickly opens up | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: good for learning about technology itself? | ●● |
| Fun: yes, very! Instantly rewarding and enjoyable | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: built by researchers using participatory design | ●●● |
| Overall: | Beautiful, very fun app giving endless opportunities for artistic self expression. Expertly tailored to common sensory preferences of people with autism. NB: PC or Mac version requires webcam or Kinect | | |

ReactTickles Magic: beautiful and engaging sensory app designed with children with autism

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| App name: | Dozens of apps by Shanesh including the I Learn N Earn series and the Match Me and Show Me apps | Version: | Various |
| Link: | www.shanesh.com – this company is a sub-set of http://www.webteamcorp.com/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Lots of games for counting, matching, shape & colour recognition, and other basic preschool skills | Price: | Free – 62p |
| Who is it for? | Designed for young children with autism | Device: | Android |
| Look & feel rating: colourful w. some fun graphics, but also odd | ★★★ | Autism specificity: marketed as such but no specific features I can see | ● |
| Accessibility: good demo phase but this repeats every time | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: good learning structure but v limited content | ●● |
| Fun: built in rewards though these are very repetitive | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: none apparent | ● |
| Overall: | The apps are characterised as being “for individualized IEP driven supplemental intervention” i.e. to support personal learning plans, and they cover relevant pre-school skills. Like the previously-reviewed Autism iHelp series, this developer has created dozens of apps from a set of simple templates and graphics. The apps all feature two children, an unusual all-white figure (snowman?) and something that looks like a TV with legs dressed as a magician. There is no response to a wrong answer and a cheer with animations for correct answers. The identical cheer recording becomes quite uncomfortable to listen to with repeated play. In some games correct answers are rewarded with a certificate as well, and this is not dependent on the number of correct responses. The games are structured with a demo learning phase and then a test phase. The content is very limited, for example the My first ABC app covers only letters A – E! The Show me Common Objects app includes a random selection of objects: table, chair, soap, bathtub and dustpan. One game described as ‘Face Read teenagers’ is too childish in my opinion. Not recommended. | | |

Shanesh – purveyor of poorly designed cheap apps which seem to have little enjoyment or learning value

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| App name: | Socially Speaking | Version: | 1 |
| Link: | www.sociallyspeakingllc.info (there is loads of useful information on this site) | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Records social skills and provides a template for mapping progress and targets | Price: | £6.99 |
| Who is it for? | Parents and therapists (speech & language) working with pre-school and primary aged children w ASD | Device: | iPad |
| Look & feel rating: plain and simple layout | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: highly tailored to this group | ●●●●● |
| Accessibility: for able adults only, but easy to navigate | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: may help identify goals but not routes | ● |
| Fun: focuses on therapeutic goal mapping | ★ | Evidence base: built by a therapist on a theoretical basis | ●●● |
| Overall: | This app could be a useful way to enhance links between providers by facilitating creation of a sharing of a personalised management plan for a child with autism. You can create a pdf and share it by email, and record progress. But there is limited flexibility for setting goals and the plan may not suit everyone. The app does not contain therapeutic content. | | |

Socially Speaking – an app to help therapists and parents develop a personal plan for a child with autism

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| App name: | Somantics | Version: | 1.0 |
| Link: | www.somantics.org | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Visual cause and effect display, encourages self expression and sensory feedback | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | People w profound learning disabilities / limited self expression opportunities / sensory interests | Device: | iPad |
| Look & feel rating: lovely chunky design and colours | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: would be suited to many but wide appeal | ●●●● |
| Accessibility: very easy to use, apart from exit button | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: more exploratory and fun | ●● |
| Fun: very, entrancing at a sensory level | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: built on research and participatory design | ●●●● |
| Overall: | Very good looking app in which a series of graphic options open up screens in which the users movements trigger interesting visual displays. Uses built-in camera to create sensory embellishments to images of the user – e.g. like a mirror with glitter on it. Great for relaxation, exploration. | | |

Somantics – a sensory interactive app to encourage self-expression

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| App name: | StoryKit | Version: | 1.1 |
| Link: | http://en.childrenslibrary.org/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Create digital story books with images, text & audio content and share them with others | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | Anyone who wants to create bespoke stories, Social or just for fun, with their child | Device: | All Apple |
| Look & feel rating: Simple, attractive, fuzzy on iPad | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: Not intended, but ok for social stories | ●● |
| Accessibility: Easy to use, for an adult / older child | ★★★★ | Learning potential: More about creativity, fun | ●●●● |
| Fun: Classic stories pre-loaded (no audio), v creative | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: None, but makes no claims, | ● |
| Overall: | This was suggested to me as a free alternative to StoryMaker, a social story creation app for Apple devices. It is a lovely app and rightly highly reviewed, and could certainly be used to create social stories. It is extremely simple to upload photos, add text & audio, and then share a finished story. There are also a few pre-loaded classic stories which you can embellish with audio etc. But if you wanted to use this for Social Stories specifically, you'd need to be a confident creator as there are no built-in instructions. I'd recommend this as a simple creative tool for children to make their own narratives, rather than as a Social Story platform. | | |

StoryKit – another story creator app with some beautiful tales loaded on already, good for kids to use themselves.

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| App name: | StoryMaker™ for Social Stories | Version: | 3.0.74 |
| Link: | www.handholdadaplive.com | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Create and share social stories including video and audio content | Price: | £27.99 |
| Who is it for? | Parents, & possibly teachers, working with children with autism and additional support needs | Device: | All Apple |
| Look & feel rating: clear layout, good images | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: a well-known approach | ●●●●●● |
| Accessibility: adult-only interface for story building | ★★★ | Learning potential: social stories tried & tested | ●●●●●● |
| Fun: Social stories are effective and reassuring, but not fun! | ★★★ | Evidence base: yes, for social stories & this app | ●●●●●● |
| Overall: | This is an excellent app which is based on a tried and tested approach to support people with autism, especially those with intellectual disability and/or lacking verbal communication. The app includes a library of images and 11 stories with notes. You can create your own images, audio and video easily within the app itself and of course you can build endless new stories and share these by email or print them. There is even a calibrator to help make sure you're speaking at the right level when recording audio. It also includes some great guidelines for creating and using social stories written by the originator of the approach, Carol Gray. This app has been evaluated by researchers. My only criticism is that in-app purchases are far too easy to make for an app which may be used by children, though there is a locked mode to prevent editing. Great for experienced or novice social story users. | | |

StoryMaker – expensive but worth it, not just a social story maker but includes tutorials from the originator of this simple but effective approach to learning.

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| App name: | Thomas Game Pack | Version: | 1.9 |
| Link: | http://www.thomasandfriends.com/uk/Thomas.mvc/Mobile | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Three games featuring Thomas the Tank Engine and friends: puzzles, mazes and matching | Price: | £1.99 |
| Who is it for? | Pre-schoolers, with obvious appeal for some children with autism with a Thomas preference | Device: | Apple & Android |
| Look & feel rating: friendly Thomas graphics & animations | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: just that lots of kids with autism like Thomas! | ● |
| Accessibility: written labels on games not great for the v. young | ★★★ | Learning potential: good for dexterity, iPad use, memory? | ●● |
| Fun: tires after a while but great for real fans | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: none apparent | ● |
| Overall: | Three fun games, but not much variation so really only good for a true fan! Slightly awkward to access and mazes very challenging to best for an older pre-schooler (4 or 5 years?) or experienced iPad user. | | |

Thomas Game Pack: fun games for a real Thomas fan

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| App name: | Toca Tea Party | Version: | 1.0.3 |
| Link: | http://tocaboca.com/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Create a pretend tea party for you and two friends / teddies with drinks, cakes, spills and washing up | Price: | £1.89 |
| Who is it for? | Pre-schoolers, anyone who likes to pretend | Device: | iPad |
| Look & feel rating: might be a bit busy for sme w. autism? | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: 'mainstream' app but great for pretend play skills | ● |
| Accessibility: 'play' button to start, but intuitive interface | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: could help socialisation and pretend play | ●●● |
| Fun: brilliant, very engaging, can play with friends | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: none apparent | ● |
| Overall: | Engaging, creative app which can be played with friends or toys and might encourage imagination and role play. Award winning developer. | | |

Toca Tea Party: lovely app with attractive graphics and simple design, might promote imaginary play

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| App name: | Touch & Learn Emotions | Version: | 2.0 |
| Link: | www.grasshopperapps.com | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Matching emotional words (audio or text labels) to images | Price: | Free |
| Who is it for? | Children learning about emotions and how they are expressed | Device: | All apple |
| Look & feel rating: good images and layout | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: focus on emotions is relevant | ●●● |
| Accessibility: very simple to play, but settings unlocked | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: images not well chosen | ●● |
| Fun: enthusiastic verbal rewards but very repetitive | ★★★ | Evidence base: learning emotions might be beneficial | ●● |
| Overall: | This app is one of many giving kids a chance to practice matching emotions to faces. It has attractive images and some good personalisation features – e.g. record your own reward audio for correct answers. However the image library is fairly small and there are some odd concepts included – e.g. “sleepy”, “yawning”, and “hungry”. For this last one, the images are all people who are eating – which is not quite the same thing as hungry. But for free it is worth a try and might be rewarding. | | |

Touch & Learn emotions - another emotion learning app, great for testing out the genre

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| App name: | Touch Trainer | Version: | 2.1 |
| Link: | www.touchautism.com | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Teaches users about cause-and-effect specifically in a touchscreen context | Price: | £2.99 |
| Who is it for? | Designed for children with autism; young, new to the iPad, and / or intellectually delayed | Device: | All apple |
| Look & feel rating: graphics simple but bold | ★★★★★ | Autism specificity: designed specifically for ASD | ●●●●● |
| Accessibility: incredibly easy to use | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: yes - to learn about the iPad | ●●●● |
| Fun: each touch gets an instant audio-visual reward | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: uses simple reinforcement principles | ●● |
| Overall: | This app teaches the user the simple cause and effect relationship between touching the screen and getting a reaction – great starter app for a child who needs to learn this basic skills before accessing other touchscreen games and education. Parents can set up responsiveness of the screen and learning rate as well as reward length. But not sure that this warrants the price, as once the child can grasp the principle there are many more exciting and educational options available to them. | | |

Touch Trainer - good for learning basic iPad skills, but overpriced for the content

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|--|---|--|-----------------|
| App name: | TubeBox | Version: | 3.2 |
| Link: | http://kawasoft.com/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Allows the user to create their own YouTube channel | Price: | £1.49 |
| Who is it for? | Parents who want their child to browse YouTube clips in a controlled environment | Device: | Apple & Android |
| Look & feel rating: simple, basic, uncluttered | ★★★★ | Autism specificity: great for any parent | ●● |
| Accessibility: clear icons, mostly visual interface | ★★★★★ | Learning potential: not likely, tho some kids do learn from video | ●● |
| Fun: as fun as the videos you put in the library! | ★★★★★ | Evidence base: none, but makes no claims | ● |
| Overall: | Loads of parents report that one of the favourite activities of their autistic child is to browse videos on YouTube. However this unrestricted access can raise concerns over safety, and for children who can't read or type their parents may be constantly called upon to search for favourite videos (though plenty of parents also report that their child has learnt to navigate YouTube alone). Tube Box is a cheap and effective YouTube library – the user can search for videos, download them to the library and create playlists. By turning off the device's internet access (e.g. using the airplane mode) parents can then handover the app to a child to browse 100s of favourite clips without risk. The clips are represented by screenshots meaning that this app should be simple to use (once the library is built up) for anyone. You can create folders with a passcode for access if you want to use certain content as a reward or have control over how much time your child watches their clips. Clever, simple, useful. | | |

TubeBox - simple, clever all-platform app to help parents have a bit of control over their child's online video browsing

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---------|
| App name: | Words on Wheels: an app for special needs children with Autism, Downs syndrome... | Version: | 1.2 |
| Link: | http://wordsonwheelsapp.com/ | Reviewer: | Sue FW |
| What does it do? | Communicator: uses symbols to represent words which are spoken aloud by the app | Price: | £6.99 |
| Who is it for? | Pre-verbal or non-verbal children to enable spoken communication | Device: | iPad |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Look & feel rating: attractive, but busy and fussy | ★ ★ ★ | Autism specificity: too overwhelming for someone with ASD? | ● ● |
| Accessibility: image categorisation not intuitive, requires learning | ★ ★ | Learning potential: replaces speech, but might learn by echo | ● ● ● ● |
| Fun: it's always nice to communicate, but not a game | ★ ★ | Evidence base: could communicators preclude language learning? | ● |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Overall: | One of many image-to-speech communicators targeted at children with ASD. The interface is very busy making it hard to navigate, though with practice it could become useful. You can upload images and record audio, for an additional fee, but can't edit existing content. | | |

Words on Wheels: AAC also reviewed in a group higher up this page. Not the best example of its kind.

One thought on “App Reviews”

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