

# Apps and Websites to Support Vocabulary, Comprehension and Composition Grades K - 3

Elaine Cheesman, Ph.D. (2017)

## Types of Educational Technology

Educational technology includes both assistive technology (AT) and instructional technology, although the boundaries between these categories often overlap.

**Assistive Technology** allows a person to do a task independently that would be *difficult* or *impossible* under typical conditions.

**Instructional technology** helps the user learn new information or develop automaticity and fluency in previously-taught skills. Instructional technology can be used in two ways – to augment teacher-led instruction and to provide opportunities for independent student practice.

## What to Look for in Effective Instructional Apps

1. The content is accurate and validated by research evidence and does not perpetuate theories unsupported by research evidence.
2. The design has professional sound and images to support learning.
3. The user interface is straight forward and orderly with minimal distracting images sounds.
4. The user interface is intuitive, and is age- and content-appropriate for the intended users
5. Practice activities develop automaticity.
6. The feedback for success or error correction is immediate and unobtrusive.
7. Users can access oral or written instructions intuitively.
8. Teachers and parents can access written instructions easily.
9. NO in-app purchases (IAP) for other programs / apps.
10. NO advertisements.

## Skilled Literacy (Hollis Scarborough, 2001)

### A. Word Recognition (Reading and Spelling)

- Letter naming & writing
- Phonemic Awareness
- Explicit phonics (reading and spelling)
- Sight word reading and spelling

### B. Language Comprehension

- Vocabulary
- Language Structures
- Background Knowledge
- Verbal Reasoning
- Literacy knowledge

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## Programs / Apps for Language Comprehension

### *Features of Effective Language Comprehension Programs / Apps*

- Text-to-speech option when appropriate
- Simultaneous text highlighting and narration
- In connected text, article a is pronounced /u/ as in *ago*, not /ā/as in *ape*.
- Focuses on components that affect a reader's comprehension of text – background knowledge, language structures (phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph), verbal reasoning (e.g., inference, figurative language), genre.

## Vocabulary

### **Lars and Friends** [www.larsandfriends.com/kidsapps](http://www.larsandfriends.com/kidsapps)

Teaches collective nouns (e.g., a tower of giraffes, a mob of kangaroos) through an animated, narrated story. Appropriate for younger children

### **Word Hippo** [www.wordhippo.com](http://www.wordhippo.com)

Website that provides the meaning of a word and also synonyms, antonyms, words that rhyme with it, sentences containing it, the derivatives, and etymology. Includes UK and US spellings.

### **Math Vocabulary** [www.mathlearningcenter.org/web-apps/math-vocabulary-cards/](http://www.mathlearningcenter.org/web-apps/math-vocabulary-cards/)

There is also a web version for computers. It has English and Spanish versions. One can select the content deck. It has several views to reinforce math vocabulary: hide or show term, example, definition.

### **Irregular Verbs** [www.alligatorapps.com](http://www.alligatorapps.com)

Reading and using correct verb form. Presents verbs in seven engaging games. Optional text-to-speech feature reads sentences. Appropriate for younger students and English language learners

### **Homophones** [www.alligatorapps.com](http://www.alligatorapps.com)

Provides practice using the correct homophone in sentences. Reading and using correct homophone. Presents some homophones in seven engaging games. Optional text-to-speech feature reads sentences.

## Language Structures (for comprehension and written expression)

### **Rainbow Sentences.** <http://mobile-educationstore.com>

Construct grammatically correct sentences with given words. Drag-and-drop with individual words or by phrase. Color-coding option. Manuscript and cursive options. Appropriate for young children

### **Sentence Reading Magic 1 & 2** [www.preschoolu.com](http://www.preschoolu.com)

User arranges words into complete sentences. Contains 324 two-, three-, four-, and five-word sentences. Decodable text with short vowels and consonant blends or high-frequency words. Manuscript of cursive fonts. Appropriate for younger students

### **Inspiration / Kidspiration.** [www.inspiration.com](http://www.inspiration.com)

Graphic organizer app with multiple templates for different text structures / genre. For comprehension, complete appropriate graphic organizer. Speech-to-text ability

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### **Language Comprehension and Background Information**

#### **Starfall I'm Reading!** [www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)

Identical free and ad-free website and mobile app. This is for students already reading. It contains plays, comics, folk tales, Greek myths and Chinese fables. Narration is highlighted by sentence, not word-by-word. It also contains math information, and explains how to read large numbers, among other skills.

#### **Kindle Books.** [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)

Purchase or download free books from [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) or [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). Within text, tap word to access definition, pronunciation, translation into numerous languages. Many orally-narrated titles. Teacher can attach to overhead projector

#### **Interactive Book Apps.** <http://loudcrow.com> or [www.oceanhousemedia.com](http://www.oceanhousemedia.com)

These engaging stories are appropriate for school or home use. Try them instead of videos! These promote awareness of different genres and develop vocabulary. Good ones have simultaneous highlighting of narrated text. Tap to access pronunciation of individual words.

#### **Intro to Geography: United States; Intro to Geography: World.** [www.montessorium.com](http://www.montessorium.com)

Match map shapes to states (US) & countries (World). It is fully narrated; no reading skills needed. It is organized by geographic area. This app reinforces new information by presenting small bits of information, followed by systematic and cumulative instruction and review. Appropriate for young and mature students.

### **All Components of Reading and Spelling**

#### **Florida Center for Reading Research** [www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)

This web site has thousands of downloadable "Center" activities in all five components of reading – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. It also has research and resources for teachers.