

# LITERACY APPS FOR STRUGGLING LEARNERS

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*In American schools, mastery of early literacy skills is an essential prerequisite for academic success. Up to third grade, according to the old shibboleth, children have to learn to read. Starting in fourth grade, they have to read to learn. Those that haven't mastered literacy skills by the end of third grade are destined to struggle mightily to keep up thereafter.*

*Mobile apps represent a new, and often inexpensive, resource now available to parents, teachers and others who try to help young children struggling to master early literacy skills. That's the good news. The bad news is that new apps proliferate so rapidly that it is often difficult to keep up with what's out there.*

*So we have collected some hopefully useful information about some of the valuable apps already on the market, in order to demonstrate the range of offerings already available, and the nature of others sure to come in rapid succession. In no way do we pretend that this is a comprehensive list, but we hope to provide a starting point for folks trying to get a handle on these kinds of resources. We have appended at the end of the list some references to web sites that provide continuing coverage of new apps on these topics as they appear.*

*The apps on our list are sorted by focus category, then by price (least to most expensive, with all prices in US dollars). In addition, each description includes a target audience ("Ideal for") – pre-reading (children who have not yet learned how to read), beginning reading (children who are just starting to learn how to read), and catch-up reading (children who have learned how to read but are having difficulties).*

## A. ALPHABET SKILLS

1. *Letters A to Z* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/letters-a-to-z-from-true-learning/id307193474?mt=8>)
  - Ideal for: Pre-reading
  - What is it? A set of interactive flashcards that teach children the alphabet. The letters – which can be displayed in upper- or lower-case form – come with animations that play when the child taps the screen. The app reads aloud the letter name and the phonetic sound used in a word.
  - How much is it? \$0.99
  - Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1.3 or later. A separate version [just for the iPad](#) is also available; it requires iOS 3.2 or later.
  - Reviews: The reviews for Letters A to Z are positive. The father of a toddler with cerebral palsy says that it helps his daughter's visual, oral and reading skills. Other parents say that the app is worth the price, and that their children enjoy using it.



## 2. *Letter Tracer Preschool Letter Writing Practice*

(<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/letter-tracer-preschool-letters/id312036740?mt=8>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading
- What is it? This app, which targets pre-readers, teaches students how to draw and identify letters and numbers, so that they can develop the skills for reading and writing. There are three modes in this app: “Flashcard,” in which students learn to identify the letters and numbers shown; “Tracing,” in which children trace the letter on the screen; and “Freeform,” in which children are shown a letter and must draw it on their own. The voice, which reads out the letters as they are shown, comes in three versions – adult male, adult female and child.
- How much is it? \$0.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 2.2.1 or later.
- Reviews: Overall, reviewers find this app a useful tool for teaching children handwriting skills and it is “an excellent idea.” Some reviewers would like to see feedback for their children’s input, and several note that the numbers taught in this app are not generally the style taught in American public schools.

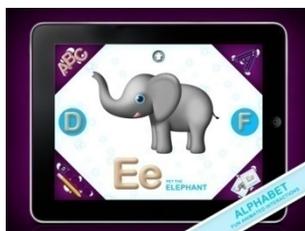


## 3. *ABC Expedition* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/abc-expedition/id417310661?mt=8#>)

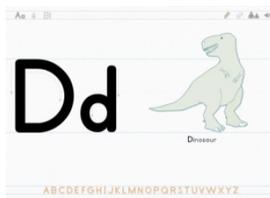
- Ideal for: Pre-reading
- What is it? An app for teaching the alphabet. Children learn letters from the “Alphabet Zoo,” animals whose names begin with each letter of the alphabet.
- How much is it? \$1.99
- Platforms: iPad. Requires iOS 4.2 or later.
- Reviews: As one parent writes, “[t]his is not your usual boring alphabet games for kids.” The sounds and animations keep children engaged and entertained.



4. *Alphabytes* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/alphabytes/id423710441?mt=8>)
- Ideal for: Pre-reading
  - What is it? An app to teach the alphabet and beginning spelling skills. Children trace both uppercase and lowercase letters and play memory games to reinforce letters and words with visuals.
  - How much is it? \$1.99
  - Platforms: iPad. Requires iOS 3.2 or later.
  - Reviews: Reviews for the app are very good; parents agree that it helps kids learn to write the alphabet. One parent particularly likes how the app teaches both upper- and lowercase letters. Some of the games are perhaps too difficult for toddlers, but they can grow into them. One complaint is that the music cannot be turned off.



5. *Read & Write: Letters, Sounds and Combinations* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/read-write-letters-sounds/id366248369?mt=8#>)
- Ideal for: Pre-reading
  - What is it? Read & Write teaches children to recognize letters, so that they can write them and pronounce them. There are two modes, Teaching Mode (for educators to show students how to form the letters) and Student Mode (for students to practice).
  - How much is it? \$1.99
  - Platforms: iPad. Requires iOS 4.2 or later.
  - Reviews: No reviews are available at this time.



6. *Alphabet Fun* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/alphabet-fun/id364729939?mt=8#>)
- Ideal for: Pre-reading
  - What is it? This app introduces children to the alphabet, colors and numbers. Users scroll through the alphabet, hear the letters' pronunciations and trace over the letters (alone or in word form) to familiarize themselves with the alphabet. There are over 70 color images in this app.
  - How much is it? \$2.99
  - Platforms: iPad. Requires iOS 3.2 or later.
  - Reviews: One parent writes that this app is more convenient than flashcards. Other parents say that it is easy to use and a helpful teaching tool. Another reviewer says that the app could be improved if the audio played entire words, not just letters.

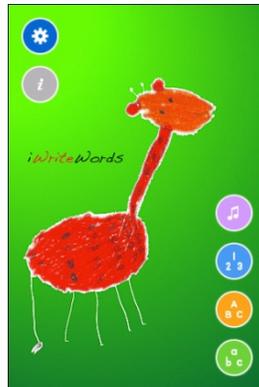


7. *Interactive Alphabet – ABC Flashcards*  
 (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/remote/id383967580?mt=8#>)
- Ideal for: Pre-reading
  - What is it? This app features flashcards for all the letters of the alphabet, with matching, interactive sounds. For instance, a child can “play” the xylophone on the “X is for xylophone” card!
  - How much is it? \$2.99
  - Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1.3 or later.
  - Reviews: Parents describe this app as a fun learning tool for toddlers. It is “beautifully illustrated” and helps kids learn words for describing the pictures on the cards.



8. *iWrite Words* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/iwritewords-tracing-game/id307025309?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading
- What is it? This app teaches handwriting skills with animations and an interactive game. Children draw letters as they help Mr. Crab, the animated character, collect numbers in sequence. Each letter and word is read aloud.
- How much is it? \$2.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: The reviews for the app are positive, though one reviewer would like to be able to choose the order in which the letters are taught.



9. *Starfall ABCs* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/starfall-abcs/id395623983?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading
- What is it? An app with a variety of games involving the alphabet. The games teach children about phonics, words and sentences. Through repeated use, children learn to recognize letters and see how they combine to makewords.
- How much is it? \$2.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: While some users say that this app is “convenient,” others note that there is no audio, which may limit the app’s usefulness in teaching phonics.



10. *RedFish 4 Kids* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/redfish-4-kids/id364898590?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading
- What is it? An app with more than 50 interactive activities for young learners. Children learn the alphabet, the numbers 1-9, shapes, colors and more.
- How much is it? \$9.99
- Platforms: iPad. Requires iOS 3.2 or later.
- Reviews: One reviewer said that the app did not interest her grandchild and was not “child friendly.” Other users said that the app was ideal for pre-K children and that it has a good variety of activities to engage kids.



## B. PHONICS SKILLS

1. *ABC Phonics Animals Free Lite – Talking and Spelling Alphabet Flashcards Kids Games* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/abc-phonics-animals-free-lite/id335670787?mt=8#>)

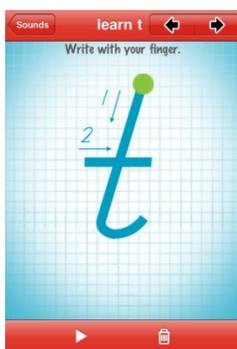
- Ideal for: Pre-reading
- What is it? An interactive set of flashcards featuring animals, complete with animations and animal sounds. In one game, a voice calls out each letter, and the child selects the correct written form; in another, children must match the picture of an animal with its correct name.
- How much is it? Free for this demo version; [the full set of cards costs \\$1.99](#).
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch (2nd-4th generations), iPad. Requires iOS 2.2.1 or later.
- Reviews: Several parents complained that the demo version is full of ads to purchase the full version – which kids can easily press. Another reviewer says that this game is “probably best used with headphones,” because the background

music could be annoying for parents. Still, the app is “cute” “brings phonics to life.”



2. *abc PocketPhonics* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/abc-pocketphonics-letter-sounds/id299342927?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading, beginning reading
- What is it? This app combines three functions into one program. The app teaches users letter sounds (phonetics, rather than the letter names) and letter writing (users can actually trace each letter), and comes with a bank of over 170 frequently-used words. A ParentZone feature allows parents or teachers customized the app to the child’s/student’s needs.
- How much is it? \$1.99, and a [free demo version](#) is available.
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1 or later.
- Reviews: Parents remark that the app engages and excites children about learning these basic skills. It is also useful for teaching techniques such as cursive, and offers positive reinforcement to encourage children. One parent wrote that the upgrade from the free to the paid version was worth the price.

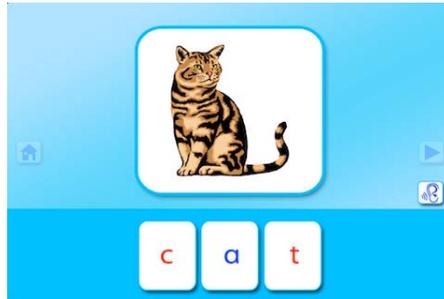


## C. READING SKILLS

1. *ABC MAGIC READING* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/abc-magic-reading-short-vowel/id416896853?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading
- What is it? An app to teach basic reading skills to children learning how to read – including those learning English as a second language. Through games and a focus on segmenting and blending, the app helps children develop basic phonetic awareness and pre-reading skills. The app has a built-in feature to encourage readings skills, rather than dependence on pictures.
- How much is it? Free
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1.3 or later.

- Reviews: Teachers call this a good app to teach reading skills, as it covers some reading skills “that most parents don’t even know about.” They like that children are encouraged to develop the skills without relying on pictures or memorization. One reviewer noted that the app pre-supposes that users have already learned the letters of the alphabet, which buyers may need to consider.



2. *Early Reader* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/early-reader/id327782329?mt=8>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading
- What is it? This app helps beginning readers develop their reading skills. It has 160 flash cards, which test phonics, sounding out, sight words and sentences. A special section, “Tips for Parents,” offers advice on how to use the program as a tool.
- How much is it? Free
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: This app is “extremely helpful in teaching phonics” but has some limitations, according to several users. The audio’s accent is British, which may be difficult for American English learners to understand. Another user says that the visuals and sentences presented are not interesting to keep children engaged.



3. *iPlay & Sing* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/iplay-learn/id342679644?mt=8>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading
- What is it? Targeting preschoolers and children who have not yet learned how to read, this app uses games and positive reinforcement to teach early development

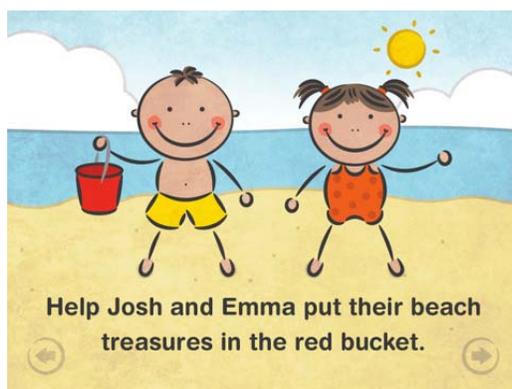
skills. Games include letter tracings, sequencing, mazes and nursery rhymes (a recording feature lets the kids tape themselves and play it back); voice prompts help children learn the games. They earn happy faces and stars for correct answers!

- How much is it? Free
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1.2 or later.
- Reviews: Reviewers like the variety of games offered. One user writes that “[t]here’s not much associated with pre-school age knowledge that this app doesn’t cover!”



4. *Josh and Emma Go to the Beach* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/josh-emma-go-to-the-beach/id386104114?mt=8#>)

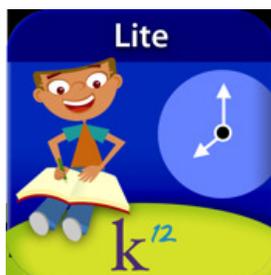
- Ideal for: Beginning reading
- What is it? This app teaches reading skills along with colors, numbers and objects. The story follows Josh and Emma, who ask the reader questions such as, “What’s next to the big rock?” As the narrator follows aloud, the reader answers by selecting the object and quantity of his or her choice.
- How much is it? Free
- Platforms: iPad. Requires iOS 4.2 or later.
- Reviews: No reviews are available at this time.



5. *K12 Timed Reading Practice Lite* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/k12-timed-reading-practice/id384484818?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading

- What is it? This app works with children’s reading skills to improve reading fluency. The app has 25 stories (targeting children in grade K-4) and 10 difficulty levels. The stories are a mix of fiction and non-fiction, and are timed to track students’ reading progress and words per minute. The [full version](#) is \$1.99 and contains more than 250 stories and 46 difficulty levels.
- How much is it? Free
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1.3 or later.
- Reviews: Overall, parents and teachers like the app, but a few users feel that “reading is about more than rate.” Reading comprehension is not tested by the app, which several users consider a negative point.



6. *Mad Libs* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mad-libs/id326885152?mt=8>)
- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
  - What is it? A word game in which users fill in the blanks of a story with the words of their choosing. This free version comes with four stories under the theme of “Vacation.” An email option lets the users share stories with others.
  - How much is it? Free (additional stories are available on iTunes and are \$3.99 per “book” of 20 or more).
  - Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
  - Reviews: Users find the app “entertaining” and a good use of time for students when they have extra time in class!



7. *Reading for Kids: 100 Ways to Encourage Your Child to Read*  
 (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/reading-for-kids-100-ways/id374210668?mt=8#>)
- Ideal for: Parents and educators
  - What is it? This app is for parents, featuring 100 tips for getting children to read. Ideas include letting kids make their own bookmarks, or leaving newspapers out where kids can see them.
  - How much is it? Free

- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1.3 or later.
- Reviews: Reviewers say that Reading for Kids has “great suggestions” that “get people excited about reading.” Another reviewer adds that the suggestions are perfect to help parents who “have too much to think about.”



8. *Read Me Stories 30 Book Library* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/read-me-stories-childrens/id362042422?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? This app features 30 books for children, complete with music and sounds. The books feature words and concepts to help children improve their reading skills.
- How much is it? Free
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: Parents say that their children like the books, especially the images and sounds. A mother writes that her son, who normally finds children’s books “babyish,” really enjoys the books featured in this app.



9. *Smarty Pants School* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/smarty-pants-school/id403824279?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? An app that tests and develops early reading skills. The students begin by taking an assessment (less than 10 minutes long), and they are directed towards activities that best match their needs and skill level. The app has five categories of games – letter knowledge, phonics, phonemic awareness, phonetic words and sight words. This app can be used with an unlimited number of students, and it

tracks their test results and progress. **Note: This app is free for a limited time only.**

- How much is it? Free
- Platforms: iPad. Requires iOS 3.2 or later.
- Reviews: The reviews for Smarty Pants are very positive. A teacher who uses the app in her Transitional Kindergarten class writes that it is useful “for pinpointing specific reading areas to work on with each child and for informing parents about students’ reading progress.” Several users find it easy to use and are impressed with the visual quality as well.



11. *Pocket Wally Sightwords* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/pocket-wally-sightwords/id333215699?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? This app features the 220 Dolch sight words, with words sets designed for kindergarten through third grade. Children hear each sight word in a sentence and must identify five words in a row to win. The sentences change, so that the child does not always see the same thing.
- How much is it? \$0.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: This app has earned positive reviews from parents. One mother says it has helped her son, who once struggled with reading, but who now loves to read. Other reviewers love the positive encouragement that the app gives to the kids to help them through the game.

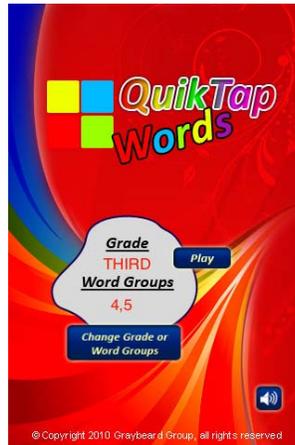


12. *Quik Tap Words* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/quiktap-words/id411616457?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading
- What is it? An app that teaches Dolch sight words with flashcards and games. The app sorts words into five categories (PreK, Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade)

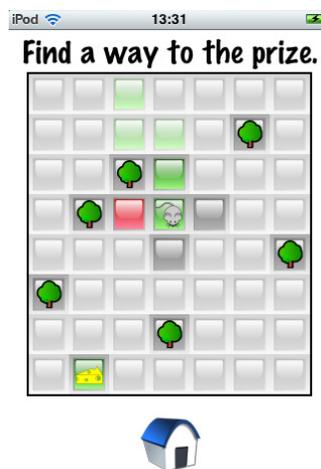
grade); the child reads and listens to the cards until he or she can successfully recognize them.

- How much is it? \$0.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: No reviews are available at this time.



13. *Scholastic* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/scholastic/id383165389?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading
- What is it? This app is a reading tool for early readers that focuses on identifying the first, middle and final sounds of a word. Based on the Montessori method of teaching, the app uses sounds and images to teach the words. In a series of games and activities, children must identify the first, middle and last letters of a given 3-letter word. This app was also developed to use in a multilingual setting.
- How much is it? \$0.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 4.0 or later.
- Reviews: This app has been called a “great beginning learning tool” that “could be great for ELL [English Language Learners].”



14. *TeachMe: Kindergarten* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/teachme-kindergarten/id336689375?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading
- What is it? This app targets kindergartners, offering four areas of focus: sight words, addition, subtraction and spelling. The level practiced is entirely up to the parent's (or educator's) decision. Children can get help when they do not understand the material, and they earn "coins" when they answer questions correctly.
- How much is it? \$0.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: Reviewers say this app has "an engaging format" and helps children learn the material and even get ahead in their classes. One parent calls TeachMe "the best \$0.99 you can spend on your child."



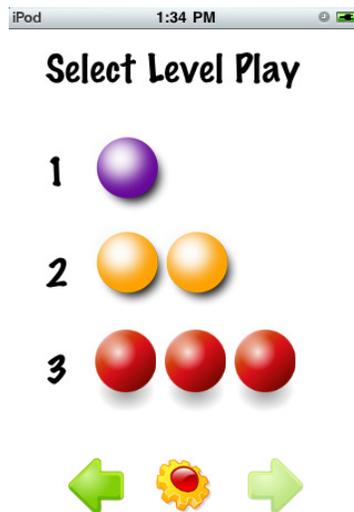
15. *The Reading Game* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-reading-game/id373648406?mt=8>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? This app serves as a positive reinforcement tool to encourage children to read. They enter the name of the books they are supposed to/plan to read and the number of pages. As they complete their reading assignments, they enter their progress and receive "rewards" (animations, sounds).
- How much is it? \$0.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1 or later.
- Reviews: Teachers, parents and librarians think that this app is a great tool for encouraging children to read. However, one teacher noted that the types of rewards offered are best suited for young children, and not older students.



16. *Toby* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/toby/id381709945?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading
- What is it? Toby teaches children how to read and sound out basic, three-letter words. Developed by a team of parents and educators from Germany, Poland and the United States, it is designed with multilingual use in mind. The child is given an object and “sounds out” the name by identifying the first, middle and last sounds.
- How much is it? \$0.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 4.0 or later.
- Reviews: A mother says that Toby is “cute” and very similar to the Montessori way of teaching.



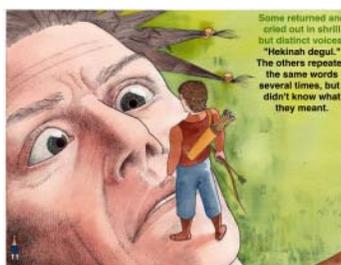
17. *eReading: Greek Myths* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ereading-greek-myths/id430731994?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Catch-up reading
- What is it? An app that compiles the Greek myths of Theseus, the Minotaur and Icarus in one story, with 37 illustrations. This app is especially intended for children with learning disabilities. The reader has the option to highlight and bookmark parts of the text, or listen to a narration.
- How much is it? \$1.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 4.2 or later.
- Reviews: The Greek names may be difficult for some readers, but the narration is clear and easy to follow. A reviewer says it can teach kids about Greek mythology along with reading skills.



18. *eReading: Gulliver's Travels, Lilliput* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ereading-gullivers-travels/id389968781?mt=8>)

- Ideal for: Catch-up reading
- What is it? Designed especially for struggling readers and children with dyslexia, this app presents Robert Louis Stevensons' *Gulliver's Travel* in modern English. There are 32 illustrations, narrations (that can be turned off), highlighting and bookmarking functions, and even a Spanish translation.
- How much is it? \$1.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.2 or later.
- Reviews: A reviewer said that the app keeps the main point of the story while simplifying the original English writing.



19. *My Colors – Level 1(A) – Learn to Read Books* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/my-colors-level-1-a-learn/id381840844?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4>)

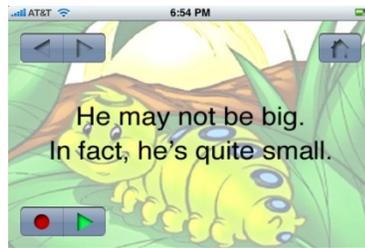
- Ideal for: Beginning reading
- What is it? This app teaches reading skills appropriate for kindergarten and first grade. This book is ten pages long, and each page has one sentence of four words. The sentences are similar, to teach words by repetition. The words are played aloud when touched.
- How much is it? \$1.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: While some users comment that the pictures are not the best quality, most reviews like the use of simple sentences and repetition to teach beginner's reading skills. A special education teacher says that "this app makes learning to read much more interesting" and is especially useful for children who are struggling with reading.



20. *iKids Play – Caterpillar's Dream* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id296437850?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading, beginning reading

- What is it? The app uses Sally M. Harris' *The Caterpillar's Dream* to teach reading skills to early readers. Children read, listen to, or record the story (which can be replayed); at the same time, they can play with and draw on the pictures (which can be saved and emailed).
- How much is it? \$2.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 2.2 or later.
- Reviews: Reviewers think that this app can be “easily memorized by non-readers and easily learned by beginning readers.”



21. *Storynory – Audio Stories for Kids* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/storynory-audio-stories-for/id337740577?mt=8>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? A source of weekly audio stories – including fairy tales, poems and legends.
- How much is it? \$2.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: A reviewer calls Storynory “a treasure trove.”



22. *Super Why!* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/super-why/id357422351?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D6#>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading, beginning reading
- What is it? A collection of four games, based on the characters from the PBS show of the same name, that teach the alphabet, reading, writing, rhyming and spelling. For positive reinforcement, as children play the games, they earn virtual stickers that they can place in their “sticker book.”
- How much is it? \$2.99
- Platforms: Android; iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.

- Reviews: Parents find the app “cute” and say that their children love it. However, one parent noted that users cannot set the app for use for more than one child. Another said that “for the price there should be more content” – the games repeat themselves over time.



23. *Dr. Seuss's ABC* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/dr-seussss-abc/id354855128?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading, beginning reading
- What is it? This app presents the children's book of the same name with all of the original pictures. Children can learn the alphabet and practice their reading skills at once. The book comes in three modes: “Read to Me” plays a narrated version in which each word is highlighted as it is read; “Read to Myself” lets the user read the story at his or her own pace, as a regular books; “Auto Play” reads the book aloud and turns the pages automatically.
- How much is it? \$3.99
- Platforms: Android; iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: Parents write that their children love the app. However, one user says that the app does not allow much interaction.



24. *Jack and the Beanstalk Children's Interactive Storybook*

(<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/jack-beanstalk-childrens-interactive/id364871348?mt=8#>)

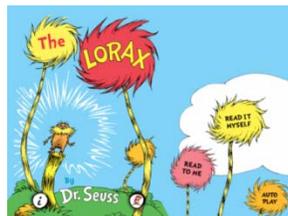
- Ideal for: Beginning reading; catch-up reading
- What is it? A 32-page illustrated, interactive version of “Jack and the Beanstalk.” The children can play games and hear songs as well as read along by themselves or with narration.

- How much is it? \$1.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1 or later.
- Reviews: A user calls this “a parent’s dream – one of the best children’s book apps.” Several users praise the interaction that the app allows – it engages kids with the story.



25. *The Lorax* – Dr. Seuss (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-lorax-dr-seuss/id367260225?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? This app presents Dr. Seuss’ book *The Lorax* on a handheld device. It features narration and all of the illustrations from the original book. There are three modes: “Read to Me,” in which the story is narrated, highlighting the words as they are read aloud; “Read to Myself,” in which the user reads the story as a typical book; and “Auto Play,” which reads the book out loud and automatically turns the pages.
- How much is it? \$3.99
- Platforms: Android; iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: Users give positive reviews, with one calling it “out of this world.” Reviewers like the different options for reading, and note that this could easily be used with older children or adults working on their literacy skills.



26. *Alpha Writer* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/alpha-writer-by-montessorium/id394038232?mt=8#>)

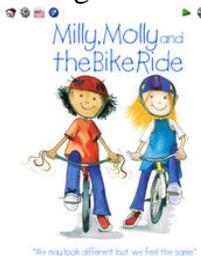
- Ideal for: Pre-reading, beginning reading

- What is it? Based on the Montessori “moveable alphabet” method (in which writing is taught before reading), this app teaches children to read, write and spell phonetically. The app has two components: First, children select an image that they want to practice writing; second, they create their own stories on the storyboard feature.
- How much is it? \$4.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: Some reviewers find the app useful and entertaining for their children. Others think it is “confusing” and not completely in line with the Montessori methods.



27. *Milly, Molly and the Bike Ride HD* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/milly-molly-bike-ride-hd/id382014358?mt=8>)

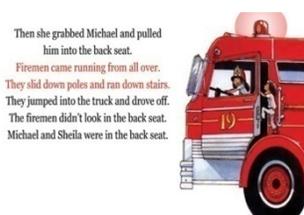
- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? An app that teaches reading and spelling skills to early readers. Children can hear the story in its entirety, hear individual words or hear the letters that spell a given word. They can also record themselves reading the story out loud and have it played back. To personalize the story, children can also draw on the pages. The interface, text and audio come in four different languages: American English, Italian, Mandarin Chinese and Spanish.
- How much is it? \$4.99
- Platforms: iPad. Requires iOS 3.2 or later.
- Reviews: A bilingual parent says that the app is simple to use and “is a must” for parents raising their children in multilingual households. Another reviewer calls it “worth the investment” and good for building literacy and language skills.



28. *Tumblebooks ToGo Munsch 6-Pack* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/tumblebookstogo-munsch-6-pack/id342957356?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading

- What is it? The app features 6 books by Robert Munsch, narrated by the author. The phrases are highlighted as they are read out loud.
- How much is it? \$5.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1.2 or later.
- Reviews: Teachers and parents write that the app is entertaining for children. While the app is “well-done” overall, it is not very interactive as the stories are simply read aloud.



29. *Alice for the iPad* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/alice-for-the-ipad/id354537426?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Catch-up reading
- What is it? An interactive presentation of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. Children read the story and explore illustrations and animations that bring the story to life.
- How much is it? \$8.99
- Platforms: iPad. Requires iOS 3.2 or later.
- Reviews: One review calls it “the best iPad eBook.” It gets children reading “classic” literature while bringing the story to life. One parent writes that since the app lets the user choose between an abridged or a full version, the app can be enjoyed by children with different reading levels.



30. *Pictello* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/pictello/id397858008?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? An app that lets users of all ages and skill levels create talking photo albums and books. On a single page, users can upload a picture and record up to five lines of text (or have typed text “spoken” by the app). While no Internet connection is needed to play or create stories, the stories can be shared through the iTunes Sharing File or via WiFi on the Pictello Sharing Server (users can get an account for free).
- How much is it? \$14.99

- Platform: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 4.0 or later.
- Reviews: Users are raving about this app. One reviewer praises its “well-designed and pleasing to the eye” interface that makes it easy to share stories. Other reviewers like the voice quality and feel that they can make the albums and stories “personalized.” This app lets children create their own stories.



31. *Narrator* (<http://www.marinersoftware.com/products/narrator/>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? This is text-to-speech software allows users to read a piece in multiple voices – different voices to represent different characters in a story, for example. The words are highlighted as they are read, and for each voice, the volume, pitch and rate can be modified. Stories can be exported to iTunes to listen on an iPod or iPhone.
- How much is it? \$39.95, but a 30-day trial is free.
- Platforms: Mac OS X 10.5 or higher
- Reviews: One reviewer writes that the ability to use different voice recordings is a feature that other text-to-speech apps do not have, and thus makes this one worth buying. There are a few reports of voices breaking down during use, though.



## D. WORD SKILLS

1. *GoodieWords* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/goodiewords/id409516388?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading, beginning reading
- What is it? This app helps early learners understand hard-to-explain words. The child touches a word and is presented with activities and pictures explaining its meaning. The app comes with three free words and their activities; additional word packs can be purchased on iTunes for \$1.99 each (there are 15 total).

- How much is it? Free
- Platforms: iPad. Requires iOS 3.2 or later.
- Reviews: The app comes with activities that teach definitions “in a fun and interactive way,” according to one reviewer. A mother writes that it does a good job of defining words “in a way that kids easily understand.” The major complaint among reviewers is that this app only comes with 3 word sets; the rest must be purchased.



2. *Clifford's BE BIG with Words* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/cliffords-be-big-with-words/id329022340?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? Children learn how to spell, build words and work on their reading and phonics skills through games based on the character Clifford the Big Red Dog. The app works with more than 115 3-letter words and uses images and sounds to teach and reinforce the words and their meanings.
- How much is it? \$0.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: Parents say that this game engages both younger and older children – though one parent noted that it is difficult for very beginners. One parent in particular likes how the order in which letters appear in a word is stressed.



3. *Word Bingo* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/word-bingo/id406264088?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading
- What is it? This app offers four interactive games to teach sight words. In “Word It Up,” “Word Fling” and “Word Bingo,” children eliminate words that the app calls out. In “Spelling Practice,” they drag and tap letters to spell out the words. The games teach over 300 sight words and track the child’s progress. A “report card” shows which words the child has mastered.
- How much is it? \$0.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.

- Reviews: Parents say that the app is fun and effective. A mother writes that Word Bingo has helped her dyslexic daughter who cannot get the support she needs in school: “The variety of word games beyond just bingo allow her growing skills to be tested and challenged.”



4. *Word Magic* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/word-magic/id293630633?mt=8#>)
  - Ideal for: Beginning reading
  - What is it? This app is a word game that uses pictures and positive reinforcement to teach spelling skills. Players are shown a picture and an incomplete word, and they must select the correct letter to fill in the blank.
  - How much is it? \$0.99 on iTunes; [the Android version costs \\$1.50.](#)
  - Platforms: Android, iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
  - Reviews: Parents write that their children enjoy Word Magic. The positive reinforcement (in the form of virtual “stickers” and “ribbons”) help to boost confidence. An Android user noted that the app takes up a lot of memory on his device.



5. *Word Scramble* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/word-scramble/id301058043?mt=8>)
  - Ideal for: Catch-up reading
  - What is it? A word scramble game, featuring words from Scrabble lists. Users are given four words, which they must unscramble in a fixed amount of time. The goal is to unscramble as quickly as possible!
  - How much is it? \$0.99
  - Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 2.0 or later.

- Reviews: This app is “decent,” but tends to freeze up. It is also best-suited for older children.



6. *Word Spree* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/word-spree/id391219575?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? This app teaches word meanings and types by letting users fill in the blanks of 30 different stories. The app instructs the player to fill in the blank with a particular type of word (e.g., noun, verb) until all of the blanks are completed. For help, users can select a help box which explains the word type and shows an example. Finished stories can then be “spreeed” (shared on Twitter).
- How much is it? \$0.99
- Platforms: Android; iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1.3 or later.
- Reviews: Reviewers comment that Word Spree is especially useful for elementary-aged students. A parent notes that if your children enjoy “Mad Libs,” they will probably enjoy this app as well.



7. *First Words* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/first-words/id292620958?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading
- What is it? An app to drill basic words with sounds and animations. There are eight categories – ABCs, animals, beach, numbers, sports, fruit, colors and shapes. The child touches a picture and then sees and hears the word.
- How much is it? \$1.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.

- Reviews: Although one user remarked that the app is only interesting for “a toddler learning first words,” other parents said that their children loved it and learned words with it.



8. *Learn to Read!* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/learn-to-read/id303421554?mt=8>)
- Ideal for: Pre-reading
  - What is it? Ideal for children in kindergarten through 2nd grade, this app has 220 flash cards of commonly-taught sight words. These include “service words” (adverbs, adjectives, pronouns, *etc.*) that can only be learned through repetition. Voice recordings play each word as it is shown to the child.
  - How much is it? \$1.99
  - Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
  - Reviews: One reviewer says that the app is really best suited for kindergarteners, even though it is targeted to first and second graders as well. Even though it “only offers the interactive value of a normal set of flashcards,” the app at least keeps the cards all together for easy transport!



9. *Montessori Crosswords – Teach and Learn Spelling with Fun Puzzles for Children* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/montessori-crosswords-learn/id384334005?mt=8#>)
- Ideal for: Pre-reading, beginning reading
  - What is it? This app, based on Montessori teaching methods, has 300 word-picture-audio sets. There are three different levels. Level 1, for absolute beginners, shows simple words; Levels 2 and 3 put these words into crossword puzzles to reinforce reading and phonics skills. There is also a “Moveable Alphabet” feature which allows children open-ended activities to play with the words (for example, they can resize words, or rotate them).
  - How much is it? \$1.99
  - Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1 or later.

- Reviews: This app has received very good reviews. Parents say that it is a helpful spelling tool, and the games keep children interested. Other parents like how it emphasizes the letter sound, instead of the letter name. A few users complained about the visual quality, and one teacher noted that a few pronunciations were incorrect.



10. *See Read Say* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/see-read-say/id322313775?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? This app teaches children all 220 Dolch words (sight words) that make up 50-75% of student reading material. Words are sorted by frequency and grade level and are spoken aloud. A tracking feature allows the user to measure his or her progress. Up to four different users can use and store their progress on the app at one time.
- How much is it? \$1.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: Parents reviewing the app say that it is useful for their elementary-aged children. A father noted that his daughter, who typically does not like flash cards or sounding-out, enjoys the app a lot. However, a couple of users feel that the app is not worth the price; a mother was disappointed that it does not let users recite the words out loud for themselves.



11. *Word Cub* (<http://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/word-cub-letters-sounds/id335597350?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Pre-reading, beginning reading
- What is it? Word Cub offers three games that teach children basic phonics skills. Children match letters and sounds, and see how words are formed. The app can be customized to match the child's skill level or learning goal.

- How much is it? \$1.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.0 or later.
- Reviews: Parents say that Word Cub “does an effective job teaching these early reader skills.” It keeps children’s attention and develops their reading skills.



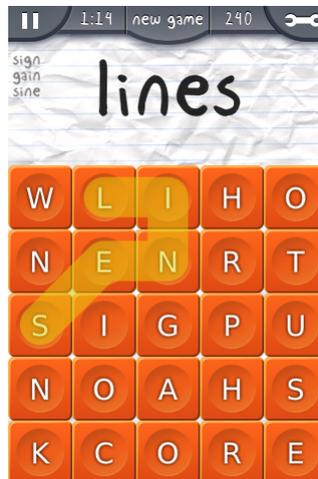
12. *Word Wagon* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/word-wagon-by-duck-duck-moose/id423629048?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Early reading
- What is it? Word Wagon helps children with letters, spelling and phonics. The app features over 100 words in 7 categories, in games that have four levels.
- How much is it? \$1.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1.2 or later.
- Reviews: Parents have given very positive reviews of this app, calling it “brilliantly designed” and lots of fun for the kids. One user even calls it “unique” because it teaches phonics at the same time it teaches letters.



13. *Wurdle* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/wurdle/id287712243?mt=8>)

- Ideal for: Catch-up reading
- What is it? Similar to the game Boggle, Wurdle is a game in which users have to make as many words as possible with the given tiles before the time runs out. The features are customizable for the user’s preference and skill level – he or she can set a minimum word length, choose the size of the grid, and even play without a timer.
- How much is it? \$1.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 2.2 or later.
- Reviews: Several users say that this app is slow and freezes often, but is otherwise a good game.



14. *Zombies vs. Literacy* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/zombies-vs-literacy/id393601768?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? The app teaches sight words and word families through interactive activities. Children can tap words and letters to hear their pronunciation, drag letters to make words and even create their own word lists. They “fight” zombies as they work on their reading skills, making their “brain” too big for the monsters to eat!
- How much is it? \$1.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 4.0 or later.
- Reviews: No reviews are available at this time.



15. *Spelling Bee!* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/spelling-bee/id291548285?mt=8>)

- Ideal for: Catch-up reading
- What is it? This app contains words used in the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee. The words are played for the user, complete with a definition, origin and sentence.
- How much is it? \$2.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 2.0 or later.

- Reviews: The app gives a “great mind-workout” although the voice quality could be clearer. Another user says that there is only one level available, so it is not helpful for learning a lot of new words.



## E. WRITING/GRAMMAR SKILLS

### 1. *Grammar Jammers Primary Edition* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/grammar-jammers-primary-edition/id386384446?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
- What is it? A collection of quizzes, songs, rhymes and animations that teach basic (K-5) English grammar. As a positive reinforcement, children receive points for each correct quiz answer; with enough points, they get an interactive “reward.”
- How much is it? Free
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 3.1.2 or later.
- Reviews: Most of the reviews are positive, saying that students and children enjoy the games. One user, though, says that the songs are



“annoying.”

### 2. *Language Builder* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/languagebuilder-for-ipad/id405801365?mt=8>)

- Ideal for: Beginning reading
- What is it? A sentence-building app. Children see a picture and form a sentence with the prompts provided. There are three levels: fill-in-the-blank, finish the sentence, and make a sentence with the given words. The app has an audio recording feature that lets the child save and send his or her sentences.
- How much is it? \$3.99
- Platforms: iPad. Requires iOS 4.1 or later.
- Reviews: There are no reviews available at this time.



3. *Sentence Builder* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sentence-builder/id344378741?mt=8#>)

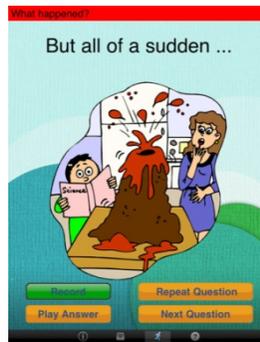
- Ideal for: Catch-up reading
- What is it? An app to teach grammatically-correct sentence construction. A spin wheel lets users put together sentences, while tracking progress and offering encouragement animations.
- How much is it? \$3.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch. Requires iOS 3.1.3 or later. [A separate version is available for iPad](#), which requires iOS 3.2 or later.
- Reviews: Parents and educators have praised Sentence Builder as an effective tool for teaching grammar and sentence construction. One teacher likes how “it prompts students to keep trying” after mistakes; another remarks that the app has a good focus on connector words. While the app is targeted to elementary-aged children, educators who work with both special needs and with adults say that it can be easily adapted to those groups as well. Another teacher noted that it was especially useful for adults who cannot write legibly or need to see a sentence written out before speaking it.



4. *StoryBuilder* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/storybuilder/id402652939?mt=8#>)

- Ideal for: Catch-up reading

- What is it? This app helps children develop their writing skills. It targets three skills: paragraph formation, idea integration, and inference. Children answer questions about pictures, and their answers are put together into a story. Audio clips help children follow along.
- How much is it? \$3.99
- Platforms: iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad. Requires iOS 4.1 or later.
- Reviews: This app is “a great concept” good for helping children learn story structure.



5. *Story Patch* (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/story-patch/id388613157?mt=8#>)
- Ideal for: Beginning reading, catch-up reading
  - What is it? This app lets children create their own stories. The app has several “themes” that form a story based on children’s responses to a series of questions. The children then select the images they want – pre-installed pictures, or their own uploads. The story can be shared as a PDF as well.
  - How much is it? \$4.99
  - Platforms: iPad. Requires iOS 3.2 or later.
  - Reviews: One parent writes that this app has helped her kids’ writing skills and creativity. It “keeps their attention” while practicing sentence structure and word use. A speech-language pathologist adds that the app is great for speech therapy.



### **Additional Lists of Early Literacy Apps**

*In today's high-tech world, technology is ever-changing. New apps appear on a daily basis, making it next to impossible to keep up with them. To make this task somewhat easier, we have provided a list of web sites that are frequently updated and provide reviews on apps related to early literacy.*

- **50 Fun iPhone Apps to Get Kids Reading and Learning:**  
<http://onlineultrasoundschool.com/2009/50-fun-iphone-apps-to-get-kids-reading-and-learning/>  
 This site has a variety of categories (not just literacy) and even has some study tools, such as make-your-own flashcards.
- **6 iPhone, iPad, iTouch Apps for Teaching Children How to Read:**  
<http://www.iphoneandkids.com/2010/09/6-iphone-ipad-itouch-apps-for-teaching-children-how-to-read.html>  
 Specifically for young children.
- **There's a Special App for that - Apps for Literacy Instruction:** <http://www.inov8-ed.com/2011/03/theres-a-special-app-for-that-part-7-apps-that-support-literacy-instruction/>  
 This site breaks literacy down into categories, such as phonics and reading fluency.

- **Learn to Read on Appolicious:**

<http://www.appolicious.com/searches/site?t=1&term=Learn-to-Read>

This site also has many apps for younger children.