

APPetite for Art!

Awesome art apps for kids (most are free!)



By Diane Quiroga, MA, ATR-BC

Earlier this year, the Royal Academy in London displayed an exhibition called "A Bigger Picture" by David Hockney, said to be one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century and contributor to the 1960s Pop Art movement. Well, that sounds about right...until I heard that 50 drawings were created on an iPad and then printed on paper for the exhibition. Wait, what?! There's an app for that?! You bet.

In a world of 2-year-olds that know how to work my smartphone better than I do, I decided that it was time to take the digital plunge-- my very own entry into a strange new frontier of art making, visual aesthetic, and technology. With my fingers and stylus ready, I was determined to review a plethora of FREE art making apps and make life a little easier when it comes to choosing that perfect app for your child!

I was pleasantly surprised to find so many creative apps available at no cost. The apps I'm reviewing below will also let you send your art out into the internet or save in your collection. Although I'm an Apple user, several of the following apps are available on multiple mobile devices. Apps are being developed at a rapid pace, so please search your device's app store for the newest available choices! Here are my favorites:



Awesome Crayon Lite

For those of you with young children, this is the perfect starter art app. They keep it simple by presenting a palette of colors to choose from, letting you adjust brush size, and allowing for a choice of four different surfaces. Being clean is what keeps it easy to learn. Upgrade to more choices for 99 cents. (Other free starter apps: PaintSparkles - it makes your art sparkle!, Finger Sketch, DooDoo Lite, iPaint, and iPastels)



Line Brush

LineBrush is a great simple paint and draw app. It's fairly self-explanatory, let's you choose from a plethora of drawing mediums (in fact, 42 of them!) as well as choose the size of the tip, opacity, and color. All of those medium textures keep it on my list of apps.



Doodle Buddy

If your child has mastered the basics when using an art making app, the next move might be to Doodle Buddy. With more options and an easy-to-understand set-up, kids really get a hang on this one. They also enjoy being able to choose various stamps, backgrounds, and even their own photos to work on!



PS Express

The PS in the title stands for PhotoShop but don't be intimidated. You can choose your own photos and this app gives you the capabilities to adjust colors, change the layout of the photo, and even add borders or create effects. This app's ease makes it a definite addition to my collection.





Thicket

This isn't entirely an art-making app, but it IS one that reaches the creative senses via rhythm beats, lines, patterns, and colors according to the movement of your very own fingers. A truly creative, entertaining, and sensory stimulating experience that I couldn't resist sharing, especially for those young ones out there. The more advanced version of this is Uzu which will cost you \$1.99.



PicCollage

This app was a lot of fun! Choose from different backgrounds, stickers, images, texts, and use your very own photos (from your camera, library, the internet, or even facebook) to create a virtual scrapbook page.



Sketchbook Express

This is definitely your more sophisticated drawing app, presenting various choices in mediums and methods on editing your artwork. You might have to play around with this one for a bit or read up on how to take advantage of all of its' features. A really useful tool for those aspiring artists out there! (If you like this, try Meritum Paint and Draw Cast as well)



Mixel

Mixel is not your ordinary draw and paint app. In fact, it took me a minute to figure out, but essentially you choose images from their collection or your own and "mix" them to your liking. This app offers virtual cropping around images (similar to using scissors) that lets you use only parts of images that you want to include. You can create intricate collages that you can choose to share or keep private. A great find for those wanting to use ready-made images!

What about those apps that actually require a charge to your card? Here are some of the best that will cost you between \$.99 to \$7.99 (check your mobile device store for varying prices):

Draw and Tell *My absolute child favorite!*, ArtRage, DrawingPad, Zen Brush, Auryl Ink, My Brushes, Brushes, Penultimate, Meritum Paint Pro.

Please don't mistake my enthusiasm of this new digital art making as a replacement for good ol'fashioned messy fun. Please DO know that on those long car rides or times that don't allow for clean-up, there's a definite way to have your child engage in some creative brain stimulation and activity. Remember, there's an app for that!



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