



Complex Child E-Magazine

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The New Era of Communication: Part 1: Introducing the iPad by Allison Swets

This is Part 1 of a new series on using technology for children with special needs. The next part will take a look at specific apps.

When I grow up I want to invent something like the iPad. I want to bring to the world a piece of technology so revolutionary and accessible that kids with special needs everywhere will be singing my praises: “Go, Allison! Go Allison!” Alas, for now, that praise belongs to Steve Jobs. Go Steve! Go, Steve!



Steve Jobs introducing the iPad. Photo courtesy of matt buchanan.

The world, pre-iPad, (P.I.), was a grim one. If a child with special needs wanted to access a computer, it was quite difficult. A child has to have good hand-eye coordination to use a mouse or switch and look at the screen at the same time. Let's face it...many of our kids can't do that. Or if he was one of the lucky few whose insurance company paid

\$8000 for a communication device he could at least communicate with the world.

Thankfully that world is gone. Good riddance!

Enter the age of iPad.

The iPad has brought us into a new era with a bang. No longer must we sit beside our children so they can play a game, hand-over-hand. iPad's touch screen allows even children with severe impairments to interact with a plethora of applications, or apps, that often cost as little as 99 cents. Did you hear that big communication device companies? 99 cents! And many of them are free!

Apps are the ninth wonder of the world--after the iPad, which is the eighth. They allow ordinary people to develop uses for the iPad/iPod/iPhone that no one else has ever dreamed of. Who would have thought you could have a device in your pocket like the iPhone that acts as a phone, camera, internet provider, communication device and tic-tac-toe game all at once. And only for \$200?

No longer are we at the mercy of our insurance companies to provide communication devices for our children. For between \$5 and \$189, apps like iComm, TaptoTalk and Proloquo2Go can give our children a voice.

No longer do our kids have to be in a class by themselves. With the iPad, they are just as cool as the other kids. OK, cooler. But I'm biased.

So if you haven't checked one out for your kid, don't be shy. Every Mac store has at least a dozen for you to play with, all hooked to the Internet, and all with a demo of Proloquo2Go, among many other apps. I have brought my son there just to play with the iPads and get inspired. But be warned. You might end up getting two.

And if you see Mr. Jobs, give him a big kiss and a hug from my son. Thank you, Steve, and get well soon.

Here are a few free apps to get you started:

- Dragon Dictation: Voice recognition app
- TaptoTalk: Basic augmentative communication app
- MyTalkTools Mobile Lite: Basic augmentative communication app
- I Hear Ewe: animal and vehicle sounds app
- Alphabet Zoo: Learn letters and letter sounds
- Make a Word Free: Phonics-based spelling game
- Social Skills Sampler HD: Basic program teaching independent living skills

Plus 1200+ plus other free educational apps, all available from the App Store:
<http://www.apple.com/ipad/apps-for-ipad/>

Allison is a stay-at-home mom who homeschools two of her three children. When not tending to her kiddos, husband or three insolent dogs, she is studying to be a nurse and loves blogging and crafting. You can find her at www.candogoods.wordpress.com