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Ice cold ball classic endless arcade games



Apple Arcade is a subscription service that allows users to play 145 premium games for iPad, iPhone, Mac and Apple TV as many times as they want at a set monthly cost. But which ones are worth your time? This is where we come from. We have played, reviewed and ranked each game of the service and will add new ones to our leaderboards as they are released. Our latest update is a whopper, with 12 new games added: Alba: A Wildlife Adventure (21); The Without Path (28); South of the circle (32); All of you (36); Slash Quest! (51); Collage Atlas (65); Expedition of a Monster (74); Reigns: Beyond (85); Warp Drive (87); Survivalists (94); Marble Knights (122) and Zombie Rollerz: Pinball Heroes (137). Finally, Beyond a Steel Sky was bumped from 74 to 57 following a series of bug fixes. We mainly test on iPhone. We also strongly advise you to get a hardware controller, given how many of the games benefit from it: we test with an Xbox controller and a Rotor Riot wired controller to see if it works and how well it fits the gameplay. Many games support Bluetooth controllers despite not mentioning this fact in the App Store description. Before we jump on the leaderboard, note that we've written separate tips for fans of particular genres and play styles. Which Apple Arcade game should I play? guide you through the best RPGs, puzzles, platformers, strategy games, and more. This quirky and really fun sports sim - Golf for golf-hating people - hits a hole in one for relentless ingenuity. Courses feature explosive barrels, cats, and runaway cars, and half the time you find yourself playing with a cow or carpet instead of a ball. There are levels in both portrait and landscape orientation; there are huge variations in difficulty and graphic style and game mechanics; there are also witty parodies of other games. As soon as you feel like creators must have exhausted the possibilities of the format they surprise you once again. There are masses of golf to play here, and everything looks fresh. SPORT • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (but this is not recommended) • What golf? on the App Store Here is the Arcade version of the Bejeweled/Candy Crush model and, as you would expect, it is both gorgeous and much more interesting than most clones in that space. Trace a path through matching creatures — representing some complications, such as treasure chests, boss monsters, and magic stones that allow you to switch to a different color — and then hit Go. Instead of a sweet tinkle of jewelry, you'll be rewarded with ridiculously gory (though cartoonish) animation. Much easier to collect than put down, Grindstone also wins the award for the most addictive arcade game I've ever had PUZZLE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (awkwardly) • Grindstone on the App Store Devolver low-fi action RPG takes the style and atmosphere of Dark Souls and puts it through an 8bit 8bit super-cool It doesn't look like anything else. The difficulty escalates insanely as you dodge, parade, and make your way through increasingly dangerous mobs of monsters and bad hombies: some levels are so challenging that you practically have to plan them. Hotline Miami-style. You get as many continuous as you want - the game is quite indulgent that way - but a single death results in the loss of all your equipment... unless you can beat the level that killed you on your next attempt, which makes high-stakes tension. Bleak Sword is fast, exciting and masses of fun. Sometimes it's also maddening, in a way it's only achieved with great games: something about how it manages to make you worry so intensely about your little stick man and take it personally when he suffers. This is an indirect way of admitting that this game made me swear. RPG / FIGHTING • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Bleak Sword on the App Store's turn-based team strategy game that strongly recalls the classic Space Hulk board game, only simpler and graphically cut. By controlling a handful of heroic space rangers, you're investigating an abandoned colony riddled with aliens, shooting, kicking, and gaining weight toward various mission goals. Very funny. STRATEGY • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (but the touchscreen is easier) • Spaceland on the App Store Thrown into an incredibly detailed and treacherous underwater world, you'll be chased not only by slowly insatiable ice, but by a swath of sea creatures ranging from cute to terrifying. Ride around with jet packages, extract minerals to convert to oxygen, and discover the secrets of depth in this gorgeous, vibrant, and unique underwater exploration game. Lewis Painter ADVENTURE / EXPLORATION • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Shinsekai Into the Depths on the App Store Individually enchanting gardening-shaped adventure game, in which the mutants and monsters you encounter play (mainly) second fiddle in a compassionate story about community loss and healing powers. Strongly recommended, but give it a chance: it takes a while to move forward. ADVENTURE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Mutation on the App Store Wonderful to watch (not surprising, since adventure time animator Pendleton Ward was involved), Card of Darkness proves that it's more than a beautiful face with an elegant and compelling design with depth masses. PUZZLE • Age 9+ • Single player only • No controller support • Card of Darkness on the App Store Search for the fascinating word in the dictionary and you should see a screenshot of this nostalgically animated adventure game, in which you solve a variety of problems such as a dragon and capture the soul of a priest. Unusually, it takes the form of a card game - every time you collect an item or acquire a new character, it is added to your deck and played at the appropriate times. But this is more of a of a game decision: In practical terms playing a card largely works like pressing a button use X with Y. No, this game is about the character, who is both dark and adorable, the strange jumps of logic and the beautiful look. It also has a respectable replayability, since there are multiple solutions and endings and 45 enterprise cards to collect. ADVENTURE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (sort of, and is still better on the touchscreen) • Pilgrims on the App Store Detective adventure game based on a locked room murder. So addictive that I stayed up for half a night trying to fix it. At first I didn't play any of Detective Grimoire's previous titles, and maybe that's why I felt a little overwhelmed at first: the game never really explains how to do interrogations, for example. And the case is deliberately complicated, full of twists, curves, red herring and background-flavored text. But that feeling of barely understanding what's going on is the mystery of the golden age murder by textbook, and quite pleasant if you get along. And the story, the graphics, the vocal acting and the humor are all of such exceptional quality that even the newbies who solve the crime will tell each other. DETECTIVE / ADVENTURE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (but touchscreen is easier) • Tangle Tower on fl app store reinvented as a road trip; the Walking Dead written by Cormac McCarthy; a turn-based version of Resident Evil. This survival game is inspired by the best and the result is melancholy and fiercely difficult. Each level is both a puzzle and a fragment of Isometric Americana: some asphalt squares, grass, picnic tables, abandoned cars, and danger. As monsters approach, you need to make decisions about what resources you need and what (and who) you'll have to leave behind. It's a fascinating and exciting game. STRATEGY • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Overland on the Beato App Store, a combatless city builder that I'd love to play all the time. The sense of atmosphere is wonderful, from the sprites of the untitled goose game and changing light to calming taps and clinks as your homes are built and your trees felled. And I applaud the way each level really feels like a level in itself, with specific goals and (genuinely difficult) challenges – something that isn't always achieved by strategy games of this kind. I have very few complaints, but I must add that scroll detection is sometimes a bit overkeen, causing frequent overtaking when moving around the map. And the night sections are pretty boring, since your people all go to sleep -- but luckily accelerate them up to 20 times. STRATEGY • Age 12 + + • Single player only • No controller support • Outlanders on the App Store This classic stone-cold multiplayer puts four Pac-Men against each other in a fight to the death. If one of you is caught by the ghost, or by a pac-man fellow goofing on a power pill, turns ghostly yourself, when there is only one Pac-Man left, that player wins. A simple setup, then, but it has nicer touches than a Swedish masseur. For starters, keep control after being ghostly; if you can then capture one of the remaining Pac-Men change role and you're back in the game. And the more points you eat, the faster you move, which gives the game an exciting natural acceleration. The Quick Start option is a brilliantly simple way to start a game with three AI opponents, but my only quibble is that it's much harder to set up a game with other humans: there is no online matchmaking feature, with the use on you to find other players on Twitter, in real life etc. and exchange party codes. Apple TV owners have also complained that there is no support for local sofa multiplayer on a single device. ARCADE • Age 4+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers • PAC-MAN Party Royale on the App Store Creepy horror puzzle platform with superb sound design and striking low-fi look. Exploring a mysterious and dangerous world alternates, in the Lost Viking style, between three totally different characters: a helpless child, a mostly helpless man (who can at least run and jump) and an almost indestructible knight. And these characters give their respective sections a pleasant variety without ruining the coherence of the whole, which is bound together by the fascinating aesthetic. PUZZLE / PLATFORMER • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Inmost on the App Store This absolutely ridiculous ragdoll cricket sim made me laugh constantly. Very silly and a lot of fun. SPORT • Age 4+ • 1-2 players • Supports hardware controllers • Cricket Through the Ages on the Oceanhorn 2: Knights of the Lost Realm App Store is hands-free one of the most beautifully crafted and console-like games available as part of Apple Arcade. While the original wasn't supposed to be sniffed, Oceanhorn 2 takes the RPG experience to the next level with high-end 3D graphics, tactical combat, and an immersive story that will keep you hooked as you make your way through the huge open-world map. There are also significant gameplay improvements, including a new launcher weapon that can wipe out bands of enemies with an explosive fireball or ice explosion, and the ability to heal yourself mid-battle with a spell. Touchscreen controls are good, by the way, but for the full experience we recommend a hardware controller. Lewis Painter RPG • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports Hardware Controller • Oceanhorn 2 on the Simple and Hilarious Double-Stick Shooter App Store with excellent cartoon graphics and a history of You're gradually piloting and updating a small ship on a mission to return to Earth, and making your way through the space pirates and other ne'er-do-wells in between. This is your general mission, at any rate, but be hired or persuaded to do a lot of smaller jobs along the way. Most of these boil down to going to one place, shooting some people and coming back, of course, but I've never grown tired of the formula, and the creators have added more missions - and a new type of 'defend' mission - in the version 1.1.1 update. Shoot-'em-up action works decently with on-screen controls, though switching from gun to grapple is a challenge, and thumbs occasionally obscure the action; works superbly with a controller. SHOOTER • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • No Way Home on the App Store Takeshi is a game designer; Hiroshi is his younger brother and the biggest fan. Your job is to cheer Hiroshi with a game that can play in the hospital... but it's not over yet. As Hiroshi progresses, you need to design the game on the fly, deciding which monsters will attack in what order and, later, when a friendly wizard decides to apply healing spells or buffs. The idea - which presumably reflects the true design of the game - is to push the young man as strong as possible without actually killing his character. It's kind of a math puzzle, basically. But this is to disprove the excitement of the concept, which rewards brinksmanship and punishes you for playing safe. And there's a really nice graphic sensibility, divided between the slick 2D game screens and the cute Fireman Sam animation of the cut scenes. RPG/STRATEGY • Age 12+ • Single player only • No controller support • Takeshi and Hiroshi on the App Store Cute puzzle where a robot spider (with only six legs, oddly enough) is sent on spying missions. You sink on every level, you collect things, you manipulate knobs and dials and you generally get to malice. Now, we need to talk about the camera before we go any further. When using on-screen controls, the camera is almost useless, wandering at fun angles at the worst possible times and preventing you from spotting the next lens. But using a hardware controller largely solves this problem, and in other respects this is a fabulous game. The music is brilliantly atmospheric (the Donna Summer pastiche in the space mission is a particular highlight), your interactions with the physical environment are pleasantly tactile, and I loved the overall feeling of being an unnoticed little creature with freedom to explore and tinker. PUZZLE/ ADVENTURE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Spyder on the Vivid App Store, fascinating action RPG evidently made by someone who loved Zelda but wanted there to be more hookshots. Your weapon is a fishing rod and you can use this surprisingly versatile tool to tackle gaps, activate distant switches, tear enemies towards you (a process that stuns them briefly) or simply hit them. These powers, combined with a dodge/roll button, make fighting hectic and fun, although it can occasionally be frustrating when a monster fields next to a pliers clasps and foil your strategy. RPG fans are really spoilt for choice on Apple Arcade. If you want to relive Zelda's glory days in 2D, however, this is the starting point. RPG • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (recommended) • Legend of the Skyfish 2 on the App Store Based on the look and reputation of the creator I expected this to be a point-and-click adventure, but it's pure puzzle action. On each level/scene, you have to climb up and down stairs, manipulate the lights, and bully the various monsters in positions that allow you to continue forward. This is a simple premise, and there is a pleasant purity in gameplay. But don't underestimate the thought and pedigree of development that went into this. There are real scratches to the head and a formidable sense of satisfaction every time you work something. While puzzles go Creaks has an unusually well-defined sense of narrative flavor, which forms an integral part of the experience rather than bottom fluff. Quirky images and phenomenal music, dead Limbo-style silhouettes, and sinister collectibles — it all adds up to a game that draws you into its world and gives further motivation to progress. PUZZLE • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Creak on the Battery Demolition App Store but otherwise delightful catalogue-'em-up where you stroll through the streets, beaches and mountains of a Spanish island and photograph the local wildlife. While you're at it, also clear up trash, repair bridges and signs, heal affected animals, and generally act like the local do-gooder. There's a nice sense of positivity in all of this. Touchscreen controls (in portrait mode) are slightly inconvenient: the top half of the screen controls the view and the bottom half of the direction, but you can't do both tasks at the same time. Much better to use a joypad, which is much easier (despite the sad lack of an option to reverse the Y-axis) and also, ingeniously, converts the game into landscape. ADVENTURE/EXPLORATION • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Sunrise: A Wildlife Adventure on the App Store This lovingly crafted mystery reminded me of the first Resident Evil, and it's not just color puzzles; it's the whole atmosphere. There are no zombies, but the dark windows and flickering TVs are somewhat scarier. The setting - a strangely empty 1950s diner, like one of those social distancing parodies of Edward Hopper's Nighthawks - has been drained of color, and solving puzzles gradually restores them. This in turn makes some objects appear, which can enable or hinder further progress. There are some nice headaches. As with all first-person games, a joypad is recommended. The only downside is that turning is slow - something I thought should be a deliberate choice to increase the paranoia factor (Is there anyone behind me?) until I found out there wasn't such a problem in the touchscreen. PUZZLE / ADVENTURE • Age 9+ • Single player • Supports hardware controllers • Discolored on the App Store's turn-based team survival game with a pleasantly unusual look and feel that reminded me of the possessed Grim Fandango. Your job is to recruit a team of other survivors — who manage to present distinct and sympathetic characters despite their fingerless, almost lumpen appearance — and direct them around a cruise ship stuck in a kind of zombie-themed Bermuda Triangle. You'll have to kill the bad guys, collect food and healing items, and create new equipment in your base between missions. The loading screen delays are a slight irritation, but the mystery is intriguing and I liked the combat and resource management elements. STRATEGY • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (but it's a bit embarrassing - touchscreen is easier) • Dread Nautical on the App Store Making small taxi chats is perhaps not the most attractive description a game could have, but Neo Cab is better than it looks. So yes, it's a taxi sim, but you don't have to worry about real driving. It's about deciding which rates to accept and how to deal with them once they're in the back of your car: which line of conversation will discover useful information and which will bother them so much that they will tank your rating? The construction of the world is fantastic, with an uncomfortable and plausible gig-economy dystopia that has materialised without resorting to exhibition dumping. And the graphics are wonderfully precise — which is important, as the emotional signals you get from the sprite faces give you tips on when to pull back from a reckless topic. ADVENTURE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Neo Cab on the Moody RPG App Store with an eye-catching look: cartoon sci-fi saga with a hint of neon. The story is great, the graphics and music great and the overall experience a lot of fun. There's less combat than you might expect from a game with so much death: exploration, dialogue, and puzzles take longer. But when it happens, the fight takes the form of a mini rhythm game in which the shapes cascade down to the screen, guitar Hero style, and you try to touch the music in time. RPG / ADVENTURE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controller • ATONE: Heart of the Elder Tree on the App Store A delightful and nostalgic interactive adventure novel that is affectionately written and full of puzzles, jokes, vampires and references to 80s pop culture. This is a classic story of underdog children investigating no-good adults. Alternate sequences of floating head-to-head cartoon dialogues, puzzles (ranging wildly in distress, from basic subtraction to Skyrim-style lock-picking) and captions to a larger and darker later story. All this (along with frosty pop's evocative audio and jauntily characterful house art style) creates a strange and wonderful atmosphere: a mixture of humor, whim, slight spectra and sweet sadness. E E it's short, and it goes a little haywire at the end, this gets a strong recommendation. ADVENTURE • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • The Get Out Kids on the App Store We waited on this for a while: Little Orpheus' main character was the first thing we saw in the official arcade preview video in September, but it wasn't launched until June 2020. Well, it was worth the wait. It is a side-scrolling puzzle platformer, in the vein of Inside and, on Arcade, Stelae. It's actually a kind of mirror image of the latter game: while the Stela is dark and mystical, Orpheus is wonderfully foolish. You are a Russian cosmonaut (with a decidedly dubious accent) who has been sent on a mission to the center of the earth and is currently trying to explain what went wrong. The game looks superb, full of saturated colors, wild landscapes, and crazy monsters, and music and vocal acting (accents aside) contribute enormously to the atmosphere. It's not the hardest game, but you'll enjoy every moment you spend with it. PUZZLE / PLATFORMER • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Little Orpheus on the App Store Calling a game The Pathless is a brave move, especially when - as here - it is a game that can leave the player without a strong sense of direction. After a deceptively simple tutorial area, you are downloaded to the main island and faced with a scarcity of tips that some will find refreshing and others tired. However, there are always online tutorials that you stuff on if you're not really sure what's going on or where you should go next, and aside from this sense of browsing difficulty (and an apparent tendency to heat my iPhone 12 Pro a touch more than I would like) The Pathless is a triumph. It's visually stunning, evoking the sad air and sublime scale of Shadow Of The Colossus, and adds the Spider-Man-esque bonus that simply getting from place to place — a combination of fiery, jumping, flying, and shooting targets with a bow to fill your endurance meter — is fun and hilarious on its own. RPG/ADVENTURE • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers and benefits greatly • The Pathless on the App Store A cheeky stealth game with minimal hint of Surgeon Simulator. Sneaky Sasquatch is fascinating and masses of fun. Play around, in barbecues, and caravans in an unnamed U.S. national park, trying to avoid the prying eyes and ears of tourists and park rangers who want to stop you from get your hands on their tasty pickernick baskets. Sasquatch was named by Apple as one of the apps of 2020 (despite being released in 2019). ADVENTURE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Sneaky Sasquatch on the Stranger App Store survival horror board game that's not great at explaining its rules and mechanisms — you could really do with a friend to talk to you through it all -- but it's a lot of fun once you catch up. You control two or more characters, each of which has three action points per turn that can be spent moving, shooting, and searching for objects. The idea is to find and destroy a necessary number of witty anchors and then escape the level; a continually generating collection of Lovecraftian monsters (the equivalent of Genestealers in Space Hulk) do their best to prevent it. The first impressions were a bit puzzling: the stats and roll of dice and even the display controls (it's a two-toed horizontal swipe to rotate, not the traditional twist gesture) were probably explained in the tutorial, but there's too much to take all at once. You'll have to learn by doing, but it's worth it: the action is tense and the atmosphere well crafted through sound and graphics. STRATEGY • Age 12+ • Single player only • No controller support • The_Outside on the First Person Dungeon Crawler App Store based on grid in the style of Legend of Grimrock or Eye of the Beholder, but with a single character rather than a party. Very pleasant and addictive, despite a litany of small complaints. The control system falls between two stools (joypad is best for maneuvers, touchscreen for menu navigation); the Normal and Hard towers are quite easy, but I reached level 40 without seeing once the item needed to unlock the next category; I don't entirely trust autosave, which once lost a nice axe that I had collected recently, but you can't save manually; and it seems to be super challenging on the processor, killing the battery of my iPhone 11 Pro and making it quite hot. But there's so much to enjoy. The parry/block system is as solid as I've ever seen in a first-person RPG, there are masses of weapons and armor to buy, create and upgrade, and I love the way it works both in landscape and portrait, in different but equally viable ways. I hope they massage some of the issues, but this is still a great iPhone RPG. RPG • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (recommended, open accounts) • Towers of Everland on the App Store A real in medias res opener, this: your plane has just crashed into a snowstorm, your co-pilot is injured and you need to get help - a mission that then turns into a bigger mystery and greater danger. Along the way your pleasantly concerned character explores memories of his life before leaving for Antarctica, and in all flashback and current sequences influences the narrative through choices of dialogue. These (mostly) are not explained: instead they are labeled with abstract shapes that indicate a general mood - enthusiastic, direct, panicked and so on. These choices don't seem like you have a huge amount of agency, particularly in exploratory sections where you only sometimes have control over Peter's movements. But the story is emotionally engaging, in its stillness as much as in its adventurous sections, and the and the sound of the game is really very nice. ADVENTURE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • South of the Circle on the App Store Surreal narrative game / adventure on the solitude of city life. Playing like a downed office drone, you have to get up every morning, read your texts, brush your teeth and go to work, where your work takes the form of a mini game that faintly resembles World of Goo. As you go through these repetitive movements, strange things begin to happen... The controls are a bit slow and awkward (your character walks at a glacial pace, which can be a conscious decision but is still frustrating) and the concept of starting a commuter looking for meaning in life seems a bit trivial. But mosaic's visual imagination is so rich and unexpected, and its humor so sharp, it gets away with it. ADVENTURE • Age 9+ • Single player only • Support hardware controllers • Mosaic on the Allegro App Store, simplified version of the Magic: The Gathering concept, where you build a deck of Power Pets cards and fight with your rivals. Card battles are brilliant, with amazing depth - you can even customize your cards with stickers that increase stats and rename them in honor of your favorite cricketers etc - and joyfully cartoonish artwork. What's particularly nice, however, is that the RPG narrative that takes you from the fight to the fight (and allows you to earn and exchange rare cards) manages to be much more: it's a fun and intriguing story about trying to fit into a new school where something strange is going on, and it's full of missions and side missions. Our only complaint would be that touching the cards to examine them more closely often adds them to a deck and vice versa instead. The controls are occasionally a bit clumsy and seem to have been designed with larger screens in mind than an iPhone. CARD • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Cardcocalypse on the App Store This sweet utwo games puzzle, in a hot strip after making the two Monument Valley games, is a delight. Play as Maria, an antique restorer on a working holiday, and get to know the inhabitants of the city of Bellariva as you repair their most precious objects. The story is occasionally a bit heavy, but it is also sweet and very beautiful. Read more in our full review of Assemble with Care. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • Single player only • No controller support • Carefully assemble on the App Store You are an adorable wolf that has lost its chicks, which by a convenient coincidence can be found by solving a level of this fantastic puzzle game. It looks and sounds brilliant, and it has a solid premise. Each puzzle is divided into a series of connected circles, including the can travel to get where it needs to be. Most (but not all) circles can be set for playback or pause; some can be exchanged or flipped. From time to time you will hit a level that seems completely completely which is quite daunting - at the time of writing I feel so about 46. But in any case before the solution, once I found it, it turned out to be logical retrospectively. Then stick to it. PUZZLE • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • All of you on the App Store The butter/battle word game doesn't work (has anyone already done Cattle Royale? All other fighters can be cows) but apart from the Arcade version on the Fortnite format it has a lot to recommend. It's all perfectly family-friendly, with food taking the place of sniper rifles and shotguns: your default melee weapon is a baguette and you get cream rather than literally killed. But the structure remains the same, with 32 players gradually minutes up to a single winner as the map closes. The music is exciting, in a potentially annoying way, and it's all very polished. With one exception: at one point, frustrating, I went down to the last two, then both died at the same time, causing the game to crash and costing me valuable XP. But it was otherwise hassle-free and very pleasant. SHOOTER • Age 9+ • 1-32 players • Supports hardware controllers (and practically requires one) • Butter Royale on the App Store All sweetness and light (and pleasantly atmospheric music) on the surface, this tongueless puzzle hides a homily difficult mechanic, and I'm very much here for it. It's a bit like those old games that moved tiles that I took as a kid, where you push the squares around the board until they take a picture of a cat or go crazy. In this case you're looking to rearrange the tiles until you can form a path to get your fairy character through, but almost every level adds something new: gates that only open when you connect machinery, limited-time cobwebs, open/close water lilies, and Venus fly traps that swallow you. Thanks to this ever deeper complexity and a sadistic approach to level design, it becomes seriously, taxing from the brain almost directly from the tutorial level. In a world of ease of use, it's a refreshing thing to say. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • Single player only • No controller support • The enchanted world on the App Store Eccentric role-playing game set in a fantasy world with technology roughly equivalent to ours, and consequently riddled with text words and selfies and power battery instead of success points. And yet this is not terrible. Not a bit. Of course, I found the setting and combat system (in which you simply have to survive, using various defensive strategies, until the monster gets tired and leaves) so strange at first that I struggled to engage, but clicks around the time when your second member of the joins. And then you start to appreciate the weirdness, the total absence of RPG clichés, as well as the intriguing story and fun dialogue. Be warned that the rescue system, at least when I tested, was worryingly prone to creating duplicates, and often needed advice on which Keep. (Developers are aware of this, so it's likely to be addressed in an update.) More significantly, it's frustrating how arbitrarily the game changes the mood of your characters, given how critical it is to the special skills they are allowed to use. It might be more fun to play role-playing in a simple and free way without having to worry about the gaming consequences of a misjudged pronk. RPG • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Guildlings on static app store screenshots won't do justice to Sayonara's joyful combination of speed and music. It's about overwhelming the senses - as well as a soundtrack so big that I've heard little else on Apple Music, it has a neon fantasy look of its own - and pushing your fast-twitch responses to the limit. Why isn't he taller, then? Touchscreen controls aren't great. You can direct your motorcycle/car/ghostly deer/whatever you're driving to the current level with swipe or resting a finger in both directions, but this is neither easy nor intuitive at high speed. It's immensely better with a hardware controller. (Also, be sure to turn off the skip feature in the settings. It's a nice idea that the game offers to bypass sections that you've repeatedly failed, but it's basically extremely demoralizing.) DRIVING/SHOOTER • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Sayonara Wild Hearts on the App Store Extremely adorable puzzle adventure game on some sort of lost frame (I think?) trying to find a way back to their friends and helping other lost creatures along the way. The difficulty of puzzles is irregular - a real head scratcher occurs early, but those before and after are simple - and sometimes it is not clear what or where you need to do or go after. These enigmatic adventure elements can put off pure puzzle fans who want to spend more time on this and less figuring out which NPC can fix their fishing net. But the presentation is really excellent: the atmosphere manages to be both cute and sad, and the vocal acting is excellent. This is one of those games where it is a pleasure to immerse yourself in the world they have created. PUZZLE/ADVENTURE • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • The last bonfire on the App Store Cool paper aircraft game with a tenuous metaphor of the journey of life: the idea is that the landscape changes as you go through sections in turn around the angst of adolescence, the wisdom of age and so on. I'm not sure, but the actual game is great. The music is lovely and the narrow point of view makes the action hilarious. You're rewarded for flying as low as possible (going high loses momentum) so you spend most of your time zooming in six inches from like a bob skeleton. Collectible gems buy you more time or speed upgrades or money to upgrade your plane. It is better with a joypad, although you may need to change the settings: settings: it normally likes to reverse the Y-axis and did so when using the touchscreen, but the effect was then reversed on a hardware controller. ARCADE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (recommended) • Lifeslide on the Weirdness App Store, we can definitely all agree, it's a quality to love and this action RPG is a 10 on the strange chart. The setting is strange - crazy Russian fairy tales about giant chickens and houses on the legs, filtered through well-executed rhyme dialogues - and it also looks and sounds deliciously strange. One problem, however, is that it looks like it was designed for a larger screen. Your little character feels lost in the default navigation view, object labels are small, and it's generally hard to see what's going on (though it zooms in when you tap to interact with someone). We mainly test on iPhone and it doesn't look optimal in that format. The loading screens are pretty slow and the save system is hard, taking you back to the beginning of a potentially pretty big section if you leave the app and come back. Finally, it's amazing how little explanation of the game's mechanics you get, such as the confusing relationship between your two health bars and the importance of bad luck. But I don't mind much, since it contributes to that pleasant sense of getting lost in an unknown world. RPG • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (and this is recommended) • Yaga The Roleplaying Folk tale on the App Store Made by the studio behind Surgeon Simulator and Worlds Adrift. The Bradwell Conspiracy is a seductive first-person puzzle that will leave your head scratching. Located in the recently damaged Stonehenge Museum, it's up to you to explore and escape the crumbling mess, but not everything is as it seems... As the name suggests, conspiracies are widespread in The Bradwell Conspiracy, and while the campaign is engaging and fun, it's the world's tradition and the secrets you come across that really make the game something special. Pair it with the unique relationship you have with the disembodied voice of another trapped survivor (NPC) and you'll have a game you'll be thinking about long after completing it. Lewis Painter PUZZLE/ADVENTURE • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • The Bradwell Conspiracy on the App Store This beautiful puzzle platformer debt to Inside and Limbo is so obvious that it is mentioned in every App Store review. You're trying to escape some big and sometimes genuinely scary monsters, and that involves running, sneaking in, hiding, and occasionally dropping huge weights on their heads. The atmosphere is breathtaking - the music is amazing - but the aesthetics aren't as consistent as those famous predecessors. It looks episodic: the beetle-infested wheat field, the forest the battlefield, the ghost castle, the cosmic dimension ... all stunning, but unconvincingly related, particularly when horror elements disappear altogether in the second half. Playing with on-screen controls can also be frustrating: it is easy to accidentally jump (often to death) when you intended to run, and the use of a joypad is highly recommended. But apart from the quibbles, this is a work of art. PUZZLE / PLATFORMER • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (recommended) • Stelae on the app store platform well made and vividly colored which, for an unusual additional bonus, works in both landscape and vertical orientations. They're the same cute block characters you get in the famous Crossy Road, but this time you're enjoying some side-on platforming action. The learning curve is superficial, which I liked, but some may find it unchallenging; you should be able to decrypt a few dozen levels on your first attempt, particularly if you use a hardware controller. Some questioned the unlockable side of things, and it seems a bit like the game is meant to be freemium and then switched to arcade format at the last minute: drug dealer style, your first new character is essentially free, but the next shot costs quite a few (of game tokens; you can't spend real money). This didn't bother me too much, since the gameplay itself is strong, but it might frustrate if you're a fan of collectibles. PLATFORMER • Age 4+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers • Crossy Road Castle on the asymmetrical Multiplayer App Store, putting a farm labourer against three pigs. The labourer must keep the farm beautiful and clean, and pigs must make everything muddy. It's not an easy game to master, particularly when playing like the human: it's hard to see pigs plummeting into the bright background and you have to react insta-react with two actions (dive to catch or spray with water) rather than the one (shoot) you depend on in most multiplayerers. Playing like one of the pigs, though, is an absolute explosion. Again there are more actions - plummeting, rolling in the mud, spraying mud - but this is easier to deal with when you have only one enemy to think about. And causing chaos will always be more fun than cleaning up. SHOOTER • Age 9+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers (and needs them, really) • Hogwash on the Twin-stick bullet-hell dogfighter App Store with cartoon graphics and lots of cat puns, which I could probably live without. The gameplay did me good feline, however. Guns have a satisfying sound and feel; the huge number of enemies makes the action wonderfully exhilarating; and the presence of a store casts its usual spell, offering a continuous parade of things to aim for and coveted. The difficulty level of Exploittens is not excessive (and you have to be able to adjust it before each mission) but requires a high degree of precision; some of the boss fights have led me to many attempts, and I keep dying pretty regularly. But the challenge generally seems right, and it's proven to be a grower. SHOOTER • Age 4+ • Single player only • • Hardware controllers, which are strongly recommended • Exploittens on the App Store First impressions were not good - I found the player changing poor - but I warmed up considerably to this good-looking football game, which is edited and updated with commendable frequency. First, using sensible soccer's top-down view (mid-game break hit and camera change - it will remember for subsequent games) clears up many of the flaws: you can see where your teammates are so that passing play is much more considered and you're better able to see attacks form and manually switch to the correct defender. Sometimes you will hit the switch just as the game itself puts you in control of the correct player, unfortunately, but the experience is overall much better. She looks slow after playing Charrua Soccer, sure, but she's also a much more technically accomplished sim footie. Your preference between the two, I suspect, will depend on whether you like your silly or (relatively) serious kick.

SPORT • Age 4+ • 1-2 players • Supports hardware controllers (and is much better with one) • Sociable football on the App Store In classic noir traditions 'wrong guy in the wrong place', you are a humble but kind-hearted space courier who stumbles upon danger and mystery by accident. Your job in Next Stop Nowhere is to untangle the mystery, escape danger, and keep various violent elements on board. Similar and imperfect characters in this point-and-click adventure game feel much more real than cartoon graphics would lead you to expect. The dialogue is well written and witty and the voice acting top notch, although the sound and text on the screen do not always match, in a confusing way. In addition to the pleasant but indisputable sections of exploration and choice of dialogue, there are bits in which you fly on a spaceship and try to avoid obstacles. These are more difficult, mainly because the camera view is not useful: sometimes a gap looks big enough to fit but it is not, and when playing with touchscreen controls the thumb gets in the way. ADVENTURE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Next Stop Nowhere on the App Store This jolly puzzle RPG has tank controls, the rotational system you might remember from the first Resident Evil games. In Resident Evil I always thought this was bound to increase the sense of panic when a zombie appeared (although some argue that tank controls are superior for fixed-camera scenarios); here, perhaps because the view is clearer and the enemies considerably less dangerous, it just looks fresh - a break from the mobile convention. And the game in general is a lot of fun. You're running with a clever sword that cuts the (which produces delicious Fruit Ninja animation) and monsters (which makes the sword bigger - eventually to an absurd extent). In a fun way even the puzzles are based on sword, with you carrying fire and bombs on its blade, using it for shunt blocks or tucking it into various machines in to be slammed into a new area. There are normal levels, where you have to solve puzzles and collect spheres, various challenges and mini games and a wide range of collectibles, clothes and so on. It's not hugely challenging, but great for short sessions. RPG • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Slash Quest! on the Better with Sound App Store, this game proclaims at the beginning, and the audio department is clearly talented. It's a shame there's no more music in the regular gameplay, but what there is to have is excellent. This is a wartime adventure spy story where your path is based on dialogue and map choices: there is no combat, or even no animation of your character. The things you decide to say or the routes you decide to take have consequences, in terms of the police tracking you down or events that take place differently. As for the atmosphere, Over the Alps is top notch and the history is pleasantly winding and confusing. Sometimes it feels like you've been tricked into making specific choices, but there's clearly a lot of content here: no matter what situation you'll find yourself in, there will be more witty observations to choose from. ADVENTURE • Ages 12 and up • Single player only • Support hardware controllers • Beyond the Alps on the App Store A café in a bad part of the city welcomes customers from the really wrong side of the tracks and the conversation becomes existential. This is the setting and pretty much the entire gameplay of Necrobarist, an interactive comic book with witty writing and a good look. I say interactive, but you have to do very little: most of the time you are just tapping to activate the next line of dialogue. However, you may be surprised at how additive this is, thanks to the mysterious premise and credible characters. Perhaps we could quibble with the lack of an option to reverse the Y-axis and notice that the controls on the screen are a hypersensitive shade, but these controls are used so little that it is not a big obstacle. The real deciding factor is your ability to sit back and hear a fascinating story; if it looks attractive, this is the game for you. ADVENTURE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Necrobarist on the App Store's single-button 2D platformer in the Flappy Bird vein, supported by a varied level design and many collectibles. There are six birds with disparate play styles - a parrot flies as you touch, a penguin swims, a partridge runs and jumps - and a surprising amount of depth, with dozens of levels divided over three large worlds. An ingenious addition to this is a level editor, which allows you to create diabolical challenges and play those devised by others (which are often ridiculously difficult). He says a lot about Fledgling Heroes that I found frustrating to play, but he well beyond the time it takes to write a fair review: it's undeniably more extravagant. I don't have all the individual results yet -- some are difficult -- but I can't stop trying. PLATFORMER • Age 9+ • 1-2 players • Supports hardware controllers • Fledgling Heroes on the App Store There is something very restful about this robotic eco-puzzle. Wander around the wreck of a menacingly familiar, Wall-E-style civilization (though she looks more like her co-star Eva), collecting endangered plants and the nutrients needed to support them. There are walls to climb, buttons to press, pressure pads to weigh down with boxes and obstacles that need to be blown or powered by tools you acquire throughout the game. There is little danger in all this, without time pressure and relatively little chance of failure (without puzzles ever becoming boringly simple), and the whole thing, from the appearance and design of the level to excellent music, is very nice. My only quibble is doomsday vault's occasional tendency to get you out of a session with the loss of recent progress: this seems more common when switching from off-game to online gaming and vice versa, and adds an incongruously stressful element to an otherwise soothing game for the soul. PUZZLE/ADVENTURE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Doomsday Vault on the App Store The first thing you notice about Charrua is that it's fast: zip around the field and the ball sticks to your feet. You can literally run rings around defenders, until your player gets tired and you have to pass or be confronted. And the way you pass and shoot is also strange: the longer you hold down the button, the harder you kick it. Your boyfriend literally stops to charge, which gives the other team a chance to get in with a tackle. Strangely enough, this mechanic hurts defenders more, because you rarely have time to end up in Tony Adams' classic hoof. In objective terms this is probably not a great game. An update seems to have smoothed out the balance issues - the days of easy 7-1 wins seem to be gone - but the problems remain with THE, which is still prone to quirky kicks, defensive errors and the like. However it's quirky and good-looking and masses of fun, so it's a recommendation. SPORT • Age 4+ • 1-2 players • Supports hardware controllers (and is greatly improved with one) • Charrua Soccer on the App Store Rather a coup, this: Apple managed to get the long-awaited sequel to the 1994 classic Beneath A Steel Sky for the first launch on Arcade, with the release of Steam delayed to the following month. This is also a point-and-click adventure game set in a dystopian Australia in the near future, and there's a lot to enjoy. The distinctive graphics of the cartoons are vividly beautiful and the vocal acting is excellent; puzzles are difficult but highly rewarding when you break them; and the game has a real to it. It's also quite funny. When it first came out I warned that BASS contained a worrying number of bugs and other imperfections, some of them revolutionary. But the creators took into account the criticisms and seem to have improved a lot. ADVENTURE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Over a steel sky on the App Store Games tend to get more complicated as they go along. Marble It Up is an example of this: the first levels we magnify you on a track as quickly and recklessly as possible, but later adds power-ups, mobile platforms, gems that need to be collected, and a general requirement that slows things down and be a little more patient. It's all fun and I understand the need for variety, but the game is more addictive when it keeps things simple. There's something about that narrow first-person view: you're right there with marble, scrolling at top speed, following it into the void every time you lose a jewel. I love it. Unfortunately, however, the controls on the screen are inconvenient and a hardware controller is practically needed, although Marble It Up has occasionally confused itself about button labeling. ARCADE • Ages 4 and up • 1-10 players • Support hardware controllers • Marble It Up: Mayhem! on the App Store Simple looking racing game but kicksass from top to bottom which is great to create a sense of speed and danger. The music is exciting, there is a huge variety of missions - sometimes you are trying to create checkpoints, sometimes you are deliberately destroying targets, sometimes you are running away from the bad guys - and weaving through a particularly crazy traffic jam looks great. A potential weakness, however, concerns controls. The acceleration is automatic, so you just have to handle the steering by swiping left or right; but the narrow layout of the portrait and the natural tendency of the thumb to crawl upwards mean that you often end up obscuring the vehicle. A hardware controller makes things easier. GUIDE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Speed Demons on the diabolically difficult Shooter App Store with lo-fi graphics and a great sense of humor. You're trying to escape the Gungeon by climbing through levels infested with armed villains and pun-toting. Luckily you have your own gun (which constantly changes shape, allowing you to fire skulls, bubbles and musical notes, as well as more traditional bullets) and the ability to evade danger with dodge shots. The first races will end in rapid death, but stay with it; the game rewards perseverance. If you liked Super Crate Box - and who didn't? Then you're going to like it. SHOOTER • Age 12+ • Single player only • Support hardware controllers • Exit the Gungeon on the app store's hilarious shooter where you drive into an arena, collect weapons and try to kill your opponents faster than they can kill you: Quake Arena in the car, practically. The game proclaims the support of the controller in its description of the App Store (which many compatible games do not care about but then it forces you to use a cursor in the menus. Several times I was annoyed to see the controls on the screen, or references to the controls on the screen, despite the fact that there is connected hardware controller. It's not very compatible with hardware controllers, but the game itself is much easier when you use one. Cars handle like people and can travel sideways and blow two up for no reason explained (the jumping thing is expected from the advent of the Rocket League, I appreciate that). But despite these foibles the game is a lot of fun; there's a nice range of weapons and the soundtrack has a tarnished 80s charm. GUIDE/SHOOTER • Age 12+ • 1-12 players • Supports hardware controllers (and despite some quirks I highly recommend using one) • ShockRods on the App Store We were all stuck in traffic and exclaimed to our passengers that we could come up with a better road system than the local council. Mini Motorways allows you to test this statement, tasking with the development of an ever-growing road and highway network for busy cities around the world with the goal of getting engaged residents from point A to point B. At first it's a challenge, which gives you a new appreciation for those much-slandered municipal planners, but as you learn the nuances your confidence - and the complexity of your road systems - will increase. Lewis Painter strategy • Age 4+ • Single player only • No controller support • Mini Highways on the App Store Finding yourself fortuitously present at a series of alien encounters, your job is to capture photographic evidence. This is a really interesting premise with bags of visual panache, but some strange decisions make it seem like a missed opportunity. From an atmospheric point of view it starts scary, but this is not supported at all, and strangely in the next levels points are awarded to shoot tourist landmarks and random hidden objects rather than the UFOs themselves. The controls are also a mixed bag: the touchscreen is clumsy and you can't reverse the Y-axis on a hardware controller, so we recommend decent motion controls. The whole thing is very short, and I wish they would have made it scarier: a little more X-Files and a little less Where's Wally. But it's not payable, and the moment I feel like a sixth level has been added in an update, I'll be back in the app faster than you can tell The Truth is Out There. ADVENTURE/EXPLORATION • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (imperfectly) • Tape UFOs: First contact on the App Store Created by the minds behind the original Impossible Road, Super Impossible Road takes the ball rotation experience to a whole new level, adding a career mode and online multiplayer so you can show off your death-defying jumps and beat your friends at the same time. You're trying to balance risk and reward, learning when to keep the ball on the road -- which is enough - and when to jump into space in search of a time-saving shortcut. This makes for a quick and exciting challenge, though it seems a bit mean (and against the spirit of the thing) that your jumps have an apparent time limit; precipitate for too long and the screen will be to black, even if you're headed for a nice safe track patch. It's not a game you'll spend hours at a time on, but it's a great time killer if you have five spare minutes. Oh - and I highly recommend changing the view in the settings, since the default one makes it hard to see where you're going. Lewis Painter ARCADE • Age 4+ • 1-8 players • No controller support • Super Impossible Road on the App Store The first thing you notice about this hand-drawn first-person puzzle is its beauty. It really is a lovely looking thing, all the butterflies and swaying trees and the filigree ironwork. The second thing is how kind everything is, as you explore the world, stumbling upon floating letters so that they write philosophical phrases/inspirations and track down keys and jars and other extravagant goals. Most of the time there doesn't seem to be a realistic way to fail, although you'll occasionally encounter a more confusing puzzle. If you're looking for hellish excitement, this clearly isn't for you, but it has a meditative charm of its own. PUZZLE/EXPLORATION • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports the hardware controller • Collage Atlas on the App Store The seventh and eight series of GoT have been written so awkwardly that for many fans previously passionate about the universe as a whole - and in search of answers to the mysteries thrown from its rich background - it has lost its appeal. Tale of Crows finds a clever solution to this problem, which is to ignore the current plots and return to the origins of the Night's Watch, where he puts you in the shoes of the first Lord Commander. As for gameplay, it's a simple and largely text-based adventure. Missions will gradually open; decide which ones to chase and which of your men will face them, and then respond to crows seeking further instructions. If things go entirely in the shape of wights, you don't have to worry too much because time will pass and a new Lord Commander will be elected, and you will counter him too. The graphics are lovely -- small isometric pieces of northern wilderness dotted with passing clouds and crows -- and the music, though sparse, adds a lot to the atmosphere. But beware that it's one of those games that involves a lot of waiting, and it doesn't really look like it's going anywhere: three Lords and a half Commanders, I've deliberately made reckless choices to find missions that are more interesting than felling trees once again. ADVENTURE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Game of Thrones: Tale of Crows on the App Store Beautiful ocean explorer that is ruined by some technical difficulties. Play as Mirai, a diver, marine biologist and passionate supporter of whale welfare (whales?). Your job is to investigate the sonore readings for animals or occasionally humans, and completists will appreciate the wide range of spotted, tagged, and added creatures to your catalog. The calm of the of the World is paired with quiet gameplay that allows you to take things at your own pace and rarely threatens failure. But the rescue system looks shaky (whale dives have been missed more than once) and it's annoying how often you have to remind the game that you want the Y-axis to be reversed. ADVENTURE / EXPLORATION • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controller • Beyond Blue on the App Store What happens if the Pinball Wizard song is about a real... Wizard? So, presumably, he handled the thought processes of the developers responsible for this adorably silly number, in which you climb onto a tower whose floors take the form of increasingly difficult pinball tables and your little magic user acts as a bullet. I love the idea that a game was created based on a single fragile pun, but Pinball Wizard is a decent offer to itself: RPG elements give it a replay value and the whole thing is perfectly suited for bite-sized game sessions. ARCADE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • The Pinball Wizard on the App Store Someone played Monument Valley. Which is not a bad thing, necessarily; if you're going to imitate, imitate the best. Like its inspiration, Down in Bermuda is an attractive and tactile puzzle game in which levers, buttons and stone structures with taps and swipes. These puzzles are both difficult and satisfying to solve, but they are only half the challenge. You also have to find the small stars scattered around each level, and this has more than a hint of touch everywhere until you find the last one by accident. At launch I found the game strangely short, with only two islands full of puzzles plus the tutorial. But since then a third and fourth island have been added in the updates, and these are welcome; bring new puzzles (those on Shipwreck Island are probably the best in the lot), keys to unlock new things in the old islands, and further glimpses of the story. PUZZLE • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (but it's easier via touchscreen) • Down in Bermuda on the Zippy App Store, a good-looking driver where you chase a target boss in your muscle car (which can turn into a water section speedboat) by destroying and evading minor villains. At first it seems limited, since there's only one mission on the main menu, but look deeper and you'll find that there's more than enough here to get along. To begin with, each current crisis mission is accompanied by separate challenges on the same track: five (of increasing difficulty) where you point to a time and five where you're chasing points by shooting at targets. In fact, I preferred them, in fact, since they reward audacity; the main missions revolve largely around your ability to preserve health, cannot be replenished, and therefore encourage caution. And at noon every day (UK time), the mission changes and there is a new course and a number of challenges to be faced. It's an unusual, unusual structure, a fun one, since it encourages you to binge and master a mission properly before it disappears, and a teaser image creates some anticipation of what's to come next -- although I have to add the caveat that the total number of missions currently rotating is still quite low. However, Agent Intercept is a simple and polished game that uses creative presentation to become more than the sum of its parts. GUIDE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Agent Intercept on the App Store A dozen supposedly primary-age children (including one who, at best, has the stature and voice of a 30-year-old) finds himself stuck in an underwater theme park and forced to fight each other for the only key to escape. The world, meanwhile, is ravaged by strange and apocalyptic events. WEC gameplay is an unusual blend of puzzles, 2D platformers and interceptions through long dialogues. The underwater section has some well-intricate textures (each character has a unique task, and these interact in neat ways), and the characters are memorable though slightly overwritten. Beware that voice acting (and most environmental signage) is in Japanese, though with mostly well-translated subtitles. ADVENTURE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • World's End Club on the Addictive strategy combat game App Store with heavy RPG elements. Recruits, train and equip a team of up to five fighters, archers, wizards, etc., and then oversee their performance in battle, occasionally launching you to make someone make a special attack but above all just watching as they blur from left to right. I made this sound simple, but there's a surprising amount of strategy involved in balancing a team that has the right blend of remote, melee, offensive, and healing magic to beat a particular opponent. The game starts easy but the inexplicable complexity, like the effects of a statistic on a character's effectiveness, quickly becomes a bit overwhelming. The artistic style is vibrant - I like the small chibi bobble-head versions of your characters you see in combat - and the music moves nicely. However, there is perhaps a little too much chat in story mode. COMBAT/STRATEGY • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (but you have to enable it in settings) • King's League II on the App Store Another for the list of games I like against my best judgment. It's basically Ridiculous Fishing with less charm and more grinding, but no matter how uninspiring it sounds, it's surprisingly addictive. BattleSky is a vertically scrolling vertically scrolling shooter and you need to get as far as possible to take too much damage or just running out of rope - did I already say that your plane is attached to a line? At this point you reeled, and you have to collect all the loot that was dropped by your slain enemies. What makes him so compulsive is that there's always something to aim for another result, a cannon upgrade, a longer rope, or a larger net. The result is that you keep repeating yourself only one more time and suddenly it's midnight and you have work in the morning. SHOOTER • Age 9+ • Single player only • No controller support • BattleSky Brigade: Harpoon on the App Store This cute puzzle takes place on a number of islands; each contains a handful of trees (felled) and rocks (real estate), and your job is to find the right way to navigate and interact with these elements to reach the next island. It looks great and the writing is delightfully witty: every few islands you get a museum exhibition curated by a monster who has comically misunderstood some aspects of human civilization. But on-screen controls are embarrassing - directing the monster behind an object rarely works the first time - and I found the puzzles frustrating rather than pleasantly twisted. Keep in mind, however, that they are very much in the minority on this. Most arcade enthusiasts out there love it. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Shipping a monster to the fast and occasionally stressful Space Shooter App Store with a distinct Starfox vibe, up to the talkative (wo)man (wo)man - not a frog in this case - and shoulder button barrel rolls. It's a bit more free-roaming and much more spacious than its famously on-rail and predecessor on the ground, but each level has a defined structure; there's not much room for exploration. This leaves you free to focus on dodging rockets and collecting bogeys at your leisure. SHOOTER • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Redout: Space Assault on the App Store's Twin-stick shooter where ghosts are erased in the way that is respected over time (shoot with the laser, then suck with a vacuum cleaner). Guns have a satisfying vibe, and the cartoon graphics of the 1990s are pleasantly grotesque. My first choice of this kind would be No Way Home, but this is a very solid alternative. SHOOTER • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (and practically requires one) • Mindless work on the App Store Strange how wrong first impressions can be. Based on his appearance at the Apple Arcade announcement, I thought WCF was a narrative game -- perhaps an artistic and semi-realistic RPG. But it's a puzzle game, with the cute pieces of the story confined to scenes cut between levels. The mechanism of the puzzle is simple. The houses can be disassembled into stacks of cards, moved and transformed back into houses in new places; the amount of space available in a given location determines the size of the house. Climbing the houses you need to get from point A to point B. It is a clean mechanism even if a little and the whole thing would be pretty forgettable if it weren't for the quality of the non-puzzle elements: those touching cut scenes, mainly, as well as the lovely music and character aspect. Maybe it's a narrative game, after all. PUZZLE • • • 12+ • Single player only • No controller support • Where cards fall on the first-person gravitational Puzzler App Store that melts the brain with something of Portal's ingenuity - although the witty backstory of that game is replaced here by a quiet abstraction. Approach a wall and you see a circle in a corresponding color; touch this to make that 'earth' wall, and everything else rotates to match. It takes a while to grasp the navigation possibilities that this opens up, but the game's breathtaking sense of scale strikes the moment you exit the first building. A quibble: you can reverse the Y-axis, but for some reason this option didn't lead to my hardware controller, which is more than a bit annoying. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Manifold Garden on the App Store Short, simple and sweet puzzle game with attractive images, a nice dialogue and a winning sense of humor. Each level revolves around a small circular planetoid on which you will find a person in distress. Scrolling left/right and up/down you can walk around the planet, manipulate the instruments and ultimately figure out - and solve - what bothers them. The message, if it's not too simplistic a term, is an unusual mixture of kindness and darkness, and there's a pleasant subversion of the game's mechanics in the last level. But it's all a little too easy for series puzzle heads, and you'll have ended up with it in not much more than an hour. PUZZLE • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Winding Worlds on the App Store Even by the standards of the protagonists of the 90s platform, Rayman has always hit me halfway; and its cool dude appearance and woohoo sound effects remain disabled in the latter iteration. Fortunately, the game itself is much more impressive. It's a self-run platformer in the vein of Super Mario Run, and while it can't match that title's unparalleled level design, it also avoids its biggest flaw: Rayman Mini works perfectly offline. And the music is excellent, adding to the headlong sense of danger that is so essential for games of this kind. PLATFORMER • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (and the use of one is strongly recommended) • Rayman Mini on the App Store Likeable, a game of adventure suitable for players on a crime-solving prodigy who loves to deal with cases, whether it's gruesome murders or lost glasses. Spotting clues is rarely a huge challenge (there are giveaway graphic effects when you need to use the magnifying glass, for example), but the story is fun and quirky and the whole thing is really enjoyable. DETECTIVE / ADVENTURE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Jenny LeClue - Detective on the App Store The idea behind Painty Mob is simple. The role of strange blob-like characters (of which there are plenty to unlock) while sketching vibrant paintings in your sad world and getting points in the process. There's a problem, though: residents aren't happy about being covered in paint and responding by forming a crowd, chasing you around to stop your escapades throwing paint. As you cover your environment and its residents in the paint you'll start chaining colorful combos, speeding up gameplay and raising the stakes -- it only takes a wrong step to fall prey to the angry crowd chasing you. You'll advance through a variety of levels in turn, with some even fighting with old-school bosses, but you'll start from the beginning once you've been captured (and supposedly grassy by the group!). He's essentially an endless runner with levels in turn, but that's not a bad thing; as long as you're content with progression in the form of new characters and environments, you'll find plenty to love about Painty Mob. Lewis Painter SHOOTER • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (and is much better with one) • Painty Mob on the Pleasantly hectic Metroidvania-type 2D beat 'em up App Store, where you jump on site cutting the villains to pieces with your sword. The fight is a lot of fun and feels harder than it is, in a good way. Less happily the game commits the cardinal sin of forcing you to sit through the boring introductory part every time you restart a fight with the boss, and these are actually difficult; I must have seen the first guy flex and threaten to kill me 30 times. Finally, note that it is much easier to handle quick combat when using a hardware controller, but this seems to be imperfectly implemented; in some menus I couldn't find a button to confirm and had to resort to a tap. In fact, the tutorial assumed that I was using on-screen controls, which makes me wonder if this is officially supported. FIGHTING • Age 9+ • Single player only • It mainly supports hardware controllers - and benefits from them - but occasionally you have to touch the screen • Fallen Knight on the App Store Like all the best puzzle games, ChuChu starts with a simple concept - the placement of arrow markers to redirect incursing mice, Lemmings style, away from dangers and towards a target - but then increases the difficulty with a number of complications. The graphics have a pleasant old-school fad and the central mechanic is so addictive that it enters your dreams. Standard mode involves careful planning and execution, but multiplayer games (and occasional single-player challenge levels) are completely different, requiring you to place arrows on the fly and under enormous pressure. This is also a lot of fun, although I had trouble getting servers to create a multiplayer contest with real people and was content to be beaten by an IA. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware • ChuChu Rocket! Universe on the Reigns App Store made its name with a super simple tinder-esque interface - swipe left for yes - and a sleek, witty grip on the dangers of dinastic dominance. Following two relatively sensible smooth spin-offs, the franchise arrives in the form of an extravagant space adventure. The creators have playfully tried to adapt the new incongruous theme to gameplay; instead of your heir take control of a clone when you die and accept or decline the advice of crew/band members instead of courteous advisors. The pilot may propose to fly through an asteroid field to escape pirates, for example, and your only contribution is yay or nay. The writing is funny and the graphics fascinating as always. But it also maintains the occasional feeling that some choices are lost or cannot reasonably be predicted with the available information; and as far as the subject is concerned, it is not entirely together. I like it, but I don't have the risk of becoming obsessed. TAB • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Reigns: Beyond on the Animal Crossing App Store for Tim Burton fans. It could also be called The Waiting Game. Go through introductory videos and wordless tutorials (which create rather than dispel the confusion) and you'll find yourself leading a small farm with space for eight plants and seven various items. Plant an apple and you will grow too; put down a plate of cookies and a dog will reward you with some pieces of wood; go to the store and you can trade lower-level items for more interesting things that you can then plant or give to your animal/monster friends. Things start fast (it only takes a minute to grow an apple) but in a short time you are waiting 10 minutes for a mushroom, 40 for a clam and so on. And at this point it becomes the mobile cliché: a game in which you compulsively control from time to time but then ignore while all the timers ran out. CASUAL • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (but I don't recommend it) • Nightmare Farm on the App Store This filthy, turbo-charged driver ticks all the aesthetic boxes, including exciting spaceship-style engine sounds and a reckless sense of speed. But handling is an acquired taste. I must have made 10,000 power slides in various versions of Mario Kart over the years, but the way Warp Drive handles drift - which, as in Mario, produces a speed increase if held long enough - has been completely alien to me. Applying the brake doesn't throw away the backend as I expected, and my instinct to apply the immediate opposite lock put me in the barriers over and over again. Given a couple of dozen practice races, I've had the rough block, and it's possible that veterans of non-kart racing sims understand it more easily; but this driving game doesn't seem cozy to beginners. However, one more reason to put the time, because it is a lot of fun once you understand how it works. GUIDE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Warp Drive on the App Store It looks like Neverson was probably rushed, because it had a lot of problems with the launch: crashes, double malfunctioning subtitles, a pause button that didn't work properly and then disappeared, so you had to it's annoying that paying customers have been treated as beta testers, but the issues have at least been fixed now. And the game - once the introduction is passed without compromise - is solid. It is a puzzle platformer, much in the vein of Limbo; in addition to the general mechanics he shares the gloomy visual sensitivity of that game, the fairytale cruelty of the old school and, fortunately, the sense of humor. Puzzles and boss fights are fun and voice acting is excellent. PUZZLE / PLATFORMER • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Neverson on the App Store Continuing the noble tradition of games of other genres pretending to be fantasy RPG, Roundguard is a Peggle-style pachinko game with a tenuous theme about exploring a dungeon. As in all pachinko matches you are betting a ball on a series of pegs and hoping to hit as many as possible before it goes down from the bottom. But the ball is really an unusually spherical fantasy hero, and pegs are monsters to kill, gold to plunder, and quaff potions. It's quite enjoyable - also because pachinko games on iOS tend to have intrusive freemium elements, obviously not present here - and the jokes between levels are pretty witty. I recommend the rogue character, whose double jump ability gives you a little more sense of agency. ARCADE • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Roundguard on the App Store Those who can handle paw/wool/meow puns will dare a lot from this two-player RPG. (It can also be played on your own, in which case you will be able to alternate between controlling the main characters of the cat and the dog.) There are tons of missions and all the usual reptile-brain pleasures of collecting spells, weapons, and armor and leveling up your character -- although leveling up isn't hugely exciting here because it happens automatically, with no skill points to distribute or the like. In the end this is probably aimed at a slightly younger/more extravagant audience than we are, and I found the relentless parade of cute cartoon dogs and cats a bit worn after a while. But there is a good quality mobile RPG here, under the fur coat and mustache. RPG • Age 9+ • 1-2 players • No controller support • Cat Quest II on the App Store Peculiar multiplayer combat game where ghosts own inanimate objects and use them to build combat machines. At the kitchen level, for example, your stray spirit might grab a cheese grater for a body, wheels, googly eyes, and a carving knife -- then swap them for alternatives when fantasy (or another spirit) hits you. This description probably overstates the degree of customization of the game as it currently is, and it's no surprise that it doesn't seem to make any difference not if your main item is a toaster or iron. Your choice of weapon is more significant: most of these are pretty slow, so you'll love grabbing the quick spatula as soon as possible. It's all pretty fun overall, but a bit limited, particularly in the single player. E E a controller, if possible; on-screen controls are difficult to hit accurately and quickly under pressure. FIGHTS • Age 4+ • 1-4 players • Support hardware controllers • Things that go bump on the App Store spoiler alert: you're wrecked about five minutes into this nautical RPG, and from then on your tasks have more to do with building shacks and crops than sailing in the seven seas. It's more Don't Starve than Oceanhorn. The graphics aren't great: the effects of water seem essential, and your sprite prowls like a puppet. The text occasionally seems to have been translated by someone who is not familiar with English. And the controls are mixed, with the touchscreen joypad difficult to use but a marked lack of assistance in finding the right button if you resort (as you should) to a hardware controller. All this against it, but damn it, Stranded Sails is fun! The game has the ability to offer consistent and essentially undisputed progress (although there is some delicate danger of pushing luck when trying not to run out of food while exploring) and frankly I can't get enough of it. A recommendation reluctantly, perhaps, but still a recommendation. RPG • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (and is much better with one, despite occasional difficulty locating the correct button) • Stranded Sails on the Messy app store but likeable sport fighter: a kind of futuristic Mad Max handball. It's two-on-two, and you have to throw the ball into your opponents' goal while enjoying some of the old ultra-violence. When I was not in possession I tended to hammer the button of the fist, forgetting the subtleties of energy and weapons; when I got the ball I shot at the first opportunity. The whole thing is pretty hectic. Neon and Fortnitey graphics are fascinating (inevitably, there are dozens of skins to unlock for your character). The grated and repetitive commentary is a little less so. SPORT/COMBAT • Age 9+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers (recommended) • HyperBrawl Tournament on the App Store This is the Arcade equivalent of the wonderful Don't Starve, although it is much less ruthless. As in all survival games you have no idea what you're doing at first, but instead of being eaten by wolves or, well, starving, you're more likely to just be a little frustrated. In fact the unconditional phase probably lasts a little longer than most games because it is quite difficult. You're adrift on a desert island and you have to forage, create, and build until you have the means of survival, but you can't create things until you've unlocked the recipe and collected and/or created the necessary resources, and everything requires a lot of work and work. Where it gets really complicated is when monkeys involved. Monkeys roam and can be recruited quite easily (if you corrupt them with objects); they can therefore receive tasks, although this is less easy. And if you happen to die, be careful that there is no automatic saving -- even if death itself is more than inconvenience of a disaster. ADVENTURE/EXPLORATION • Age 9+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers • Survivalists on the App Store Slower turn titles are good (as civilization VI amply demonstrated) but it's hard to imagine a real-time strategy that makes sense on iOS or Apple TV devices: all that fast micromangement and fiddly shouts for a hot mouse and keyboard key. Red Reign hovers around this drastically simplifying unit control to the extent that you can tell them to do exactly two things: load down one of the lanes leading to the enemy base (each lane has its own big button) or stay in place and protect yours. They're pretty self-sufficient, so you can focus on updating your base, producing multiple units, or keeping your finger on trees or your gold mine so you generate resources faster. A strangely simple version of the RTS genre, therefore, but perfect for smaller screens. And the pictures are adorable, seemingly mixed by equal parts of old-school Kingdom Rush and Warcraft. STRATEGY • Age 9+ • 1-2 players • Support hardware controllers • Red Reign on the Jolly App Store but lightweight platformer first person, where you (a princess) have to rush to an island collecting gems to redeem a prince. This gender change premise is a nice touch, though superficial, since you never see either the prince or princess in the normal single-player gameplay. The action itself is a lot of fun, driven by a wonderfully boisterous soundtrack. The creators are evidently fond of the old nail monster routine throws you into the water, and failure can be frustrating, but this makes you feel the most valuable successes. After an update (which also added the ability to reverse the Y-hooray axis) we are now up to three courses, each of which hosts a handful of time trial challenges and the main mission. However, there is still not a huge amount of variety and this game is probably better suited for short trials than for long-term commitments. PLATFORMER • Age 4+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers • Kings of the Castle on the absolutely gorgeous 2D App Store Platform with hints of tower defense at times and lots of fun weapons and equipment to create and collect. The platformers are all on the jump mechanism, however, and I found it a bit awkward. Metroidvania style, you get double standard jumps and the ability to slide down and/or give up from vertical surfaces, but it's one of the most complicated examples of the genre I've tried. Overall it's pretty fun, although writing is occasionally a slap in the face and a controller is very recommended - go into the settings and select the directional arrows option, which does buttons on the screen. PLATFORMER • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Star Fetched on the App Store The mechanical concept here evokes the powerful Ridiculous Fishing, as you spend the game the commercial end descending from a fishing rod while searching for prey in the deep water. This similarity is just deep skin, however, and your rod control is so limitless that it's essentially just a free-roaming underwater action game. As such things go the gameplay is pretty solid, however: each level involves combat, puzzle elements, hidden coins, and a final fight with the boss. The fish you are looking for are really electronic devices that can create a specific musical sound, and the sounds thus collected can be used to compose songs in a compositional subgame. Graphically Monomials is winning enormously, with the primary color exuberance of classic SEGA titles, and overall this is a completely cheerful effort. SPORT / PLATFORMER • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Monomali on the App Store You are a ball of light, right - stay with me here - surrounded by particles. There's a kind of bioluminescent shape moving towards you. It's like you look and interact with microscopic organisms in the ocean... but not quite. The realistic look and incredible sounds and induce a sense of genuine childlike wonder for the first levels. But in terms of gameplay there isn't much to do: what you're trying to do, most of the time, is convince an object you don't control to move the screen to an unknown target. There are clues, but there are also many trial and error. It's imperfect and a bit limited as a game, then. But go with the flow and you'll enjoy the weird, calming and trippy experience it is. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Support hardware controllers, although it's easier to make small movements via touchscreen • Realistic: Chapter One on the fairly standard number 3D Action Adventure App Store that could, like the Steven Universe and Loud House titles at the bottom of the list, land better if you're familiar with cartoon source material. The story is not well explained and the characters are introduced as if you should know who I am - which I didn't do. As the epomymous bushido warrior wanders the landscape until he finds villains, then hammer the attack button until they disappear. At least that's how I did it, but there's a lot of depth in combat if you choose to watch: strong and weak attacks; dodges, blocks and parades; numerous different weapons with separate abilities to level up. To be honest, there's probably too much freedom thrown at you, and since you can get away with a simple approach, it's tempting to use one. Aesthetically it's kind of beautiful but slightly rough in places, a characteristic problem with cartoon adaptations: computer graphics never look as smooth as TV animation. But it is quite amusing, provided a joypad. On-screen controls are desperately difficult to use under pressure - there are simply too many buttons. FIGHTER • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (strongly recommended) • Samurai Jack on the Store Cheerful if limited puzzle in turn musical. The protagonist, who can only be described as blobs, activates triggers and opens barriers by playing the correct sequence of sounds when required. There's more to that premise than you might think, since the blob, in addition to playing its own notes, can recruit new sounds and drag them for the run; obstacles limit the places where it can carry these sidkick practices, and sometimes you have to make use of long strings and time-delayed speakers to get a sound wave to the required destination. But you're unlikely to be stuck on a puzzle for long. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (and works well) • The lullaby of life on the App Store This brings me back. It's a side-scrolling beat! You control a trash robot, and your job is to pick up the trash and throw it in a truck that follows you. Your rivals do not kindly take you into their territory, but you have a solution: kill them and throw their bodies in the truck. The fight seems a bit shy and I still have to find a lot of subtlety: there are combos - sort of - but these are generally to be avoided because the third attack is slower and can leave you vulnerable. I suspect it will work better as a multiplayer, but it has not been able to match me with any human teammates and there is no option to fight alongside AI players. FIGHTS • Age 9+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers • Scrappers on the App Store Good-looking sci-fi strategy game set on an adorably small planetoid about to explode. It's territory-based, and the idea is to capture or destroy as many as possible using a mixture of ground troops, planes, and long-range missiles. A curious and disappointing omission is a single-player campaign with a difficulty curve and progression. Instead, as soon as you go through the short tutorial (which, unusually for a mobile game, you turn on the under- side rather than educating too much) you are immersed in two-player duels against real people or AI. STRATEGY • Age 12+ • 1-2 players • No controller support • Star commanders on the Dragons App Store have conquered the planet and everyone welcomes our new reptile lords... except for the main characters of EarthNight, a self-runner with a slight resemblance to the great Tiny

Wings. Taking things one immense dragon at a time, you're running, slipping, jumping, and sliding down the creature's back, dodding smaller monsters, and collecting loose treasures (why didn't he fall?), before reaching for his head and stabbing her, shadow-style colossus-style. Then you jump off the slain beast and free you to the other. The game looks great and the variety of dragons is pleasantly challenging. But Tiny Wings comparison is instructive: with many more motion options this can't match the elegant simplicity and accessibility of that game, and never really explains how to kill dragons - although some will like the fact that you have to fix things yourself. PLATFORMER • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • EarthNight on the App Store Readers of a certain vintage will have fond memories of Flight Control, a best-selling iOS game that came out in 2009 and disappeared from the App Store in 2015. The players took on the role of air traffic controller at a crowded airport, every time a plane arrived, it was your job to plot a path on the screen that would lead it to a runway of the correct color, without hitting other planes. Outta Control is the same concept, except that it's arguing with kids instead of planes. Which immediately makes less sense; children do not explode if they come across each other, nor do they disappear comfortably after reaching their destination. But that's fine. The game works because this is such a brilliant and durable mechanic - as is obvious from the wealth of flight control imitators available to date - and it is undeniably addictive. But Outta Control has nothing special or new to recommend it on, unless you're a fan of the Nickelodeon TV series it's based on. ARCADE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (but it's much harder with one) • Loud House: Outta Control on the clean but limited Puzzer App Store based on those old memory games corresponding to the numbers. Open two chests with the same number inside and you can make an attack of that power; keep matching chests and you can add more numbers, multipliers, etc., but you run the risk of a counterattack that damages you and closes all the chests you have on the go. It's pretty fun and looks pretty cool, and the next levels have the added difficulty of adding timers and shields that protect your enemy unless you exceed or below a specified number. However, it never seems like you're progressing tactically: there's not much depth. PUZZLE • Age 9+ • Single player only • No controller support • Tales of Memo on the App Store Frazzled commuters will enjoy this relaxing puzzle, which brings the pleasures of a Bank Holiday puzzle to your mobile screen - both in landscape and portrait mode, which is an unusual bonus. Each level begins life as a silent black-and-white sketch, but as you put the right pieces on the board the colors gradually reappear and the music plays. It's all pretty cool and the back-to-front difficulty curve - at first difficult but easier as the pieces pile up - is generally satisfying. I will add, however, that the level-specific difficulty is wildly inconsistent and there is no apparent way to request an easy or advanced puzzle. It all depends on how repetitive the model is, and to what extent this repetition maps to the grid: on *Kawaii Cookout* I kept getting pieces that fit in four different places, which turned it into unsurneable trial and error. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • Single player only • No controller support • Modeled on the glossy but largely conventional action-platform App Store where a half genius jumps on the screen killing the villains with hair and, later, magic. Fans of the series won't be disappointed, although I found the on-screen controls super frustrating, frequently hitting the jump instead of attacking (or vice versa) at critical moments – it's much better when played with a hardware controller. PLATFORMER • Ages 12 and up • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Shantae and the seven sirens on the App Store Who lives in a barnacle under the sea? SpongeBob SquarePants, arrived on Apple Arcade in this tie-in self-runner platformer game. Let's say self-runner, but it's an unusually easy example like that: you can go back to grab the things you missed and there's no time pressure. Also, it's not as tightly designed as such games tend to be, with touch controls not responding (a joypad improves things) and enemies that can be hard to spot. However, it looks good and features the vocal work of the original cast. Variety is provided by secondary characters that give you specific skills and fun transformations. PLATFORMER • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • SprogesBob: Patty Pursuit on the App Store's online multiplayer fighter based on the popular brick-based building toy. The action is simple but fun: running into one of the different 2D arenas and beating each other with guns and small arms. The more games, the more parts of minifigures are unlocked to customize your character, which is cosmetic but fascinating. The game itself is pleasant, therefore, but seems to be overly dependent on a good network connection, or underperformance, or both; I have yet to successfully set up a party game and on multiple occasions (even when I'm connected to what I thought was reasonably decent Wi-Fi) my Brawl games were plagued by delay. This is a bit annoying, given Apple Arcade's promises to play offline. The only offline part of the game is an uninspiring training mode. FIGHTING / SHOOTER • Age 9+ • 1-10 players • Supports hardware controllers (and requires virtually one) • Lego Brawls on the App Store Tower defense game that sometimes pretends to be a first-person shooter. You are a Martian explorer trying to resist the alien hordes surrounding your small base; sometimes you're building defensive structures (automated lasers, explosive barriers, etc.), and sometimes you're changing your sight and shooting them personally. It's therefore multitasking: keeping an eye on the radar, the condition of your towers, the solar energy available for the construction of new towers and your personal supply of ammunition. It's a bit stressful, for that reason, and a bit limited in scope, but still quite fun. STRATEGY / SHOOTER • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controller (but touchscreen is fine and probably easier) • Don't bug me on the app store's retro arcade number where you (a bird) descend the steps of a mountain to retrieve/hatch egg eggs then come back again as quickly as possible, avoiding bad guys and obstacles. It is a pleasantly simple and elegant concept, which is cosmetically reminiscent of the classic Q*bert of the 80s, but rather disappointed by the controls. On the touchscreen you are scrolling, which does not work terribly well for accuracy or speed; using a hardware controller improves things a bit, but it is still very inclined to overcome. This is obviously frustrating in a game where time is short. ARCADE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Dodo Peak on the Towaga App Store calls itself a double stick game, but it's not accurate at all: it's really a single-stick, because on most levels your character is stuck in one place and your job is simply to shoot the bad guys that come at you from all angles. From time to time you skyrocket and you have the chance to move and shoot, and it's a cruel reminder of how fun twin-sticks can be if they're allowed. The appearance and narrative flavor are both pleasantly strange, although it's a shame that the English text contains so many mistakes. I didn't feel like there was a lot of progression in level design and found the stationary levels quite stressful. SHOOTER • Age 12+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers • Towaga: Among Shadows on the App Store Share numerous beats with Assemble With Care, Possessions also weaves a sober story around a series of simple puzzles. And if this is your jam you should definitely try both. In this case the puzzles are so easy and the whole thing so short (you'll finish in 45 minutes) that in terms of pure play it needs to be ranked lower. The moral of the story is also pretty simple (and probably guessable by the title), but I love the game's wordless delivery of that message: first it encourages you to explore and have fun in wonderful spaces, and then it makes you question how much those spaces are really worth. PUZZLE • Age 9+ • Single player only • No controller support • Possessions on the App Store I had some good times with this turn-based tactical RPG, deep, tense and blessed with excellent artwork. But here's my reservation: card game elements feel like an afterthought. Deck construction is a trendy (and very rewarding) genre, but merging it into an RPG framework is not easy. Spelldrifter waits quite a while, perhaps significantly, before allowing you to have any control over your cards, and even then you're building your deck between fights rather than in the game – in other words, it's more Magic: The Gathering than Ascension. The cards themselves look good, but mostly they're just attacks, healers, and buffs; you don't get many of the interesting combos and synergies you get in Dream Quest, for example. In addition Parents of young children may find that the cock-rock soundtrack reminds them of Blaze and the Monster Machines, which rather underestimates the atmosphere. CARD / RPG • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controller (but touchscreen touchscreen) easier) • Spelldrifter on the App Store This gorgeous and gentle puzzle puts you in the role of back garden watercolours. At each level some paint blobs are dripped on the canvas, along with one or more targets that you need to reach with a specific color by applying swiped brushstrokes and, often, mixing two colors together. This simple concept is quickly complicated by mazes of pre-painted lines and water droplets that cancel out the color, and the 50 levels provided at launch (final credits say more are coming) bend reasonably at the end, while remaining pleasantly relaxed at the same time. But there is a confusion in puzzles that is unsatisfactory - sometimes you are not sure you are doing the wrong thing or doing the right thing awkwardly (this is not helped by the fact that the puzzle is partially hidden under your finger). And often the solution turns out to be to go after that blob that doesn't seem to be enough space behind it. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • Single player only • No controller support • tint. on the App Store Tasteful but slightly antiseptic puzzle game in which you manipulate the perspective (hence, presumably, the name) to drive a ball around inline tracked objects. Undeniably cleverly designed, Spek shares Monument Valley's sense of optical magic — and the relatively sweet curve of difficulty — but not its heart. Bonus points, however, for the interesting AR mode, where puzzles are projected onto the surfaces of your home, office etc. and you reach a solution by walking physically. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (but the touchscreen is easier) • Spek on the App Store This first mode of the therapeutic response game, Release Stress, is about catharsis through frantic destruction: it is a relatively traditional bullet shooter except that enemy movements, weapon fire etc. are synchronized with music. It is difficult to distinguish between power-ups and enemies, but this part mainly works, as long as you have a joypad, since the controls on the screen are not fast enough at all. Calm mode, meanwhile, is bound to be more restful and does not require you to do any steering, dodge or aim; you just have to touch when two circles overlap. Again it's not entirely clear what you should do and the accuracy required to get a good score - and, some might say, the fact that you've been marked - actually makes it not very calming. Mind Symphony is the egg of a curate's package: essentially two unrelated games that are sometimes original and sometimes good but very rarely both at once. And the number of small problems -- how to convince him (unsuccessfully) to connect with Apple Music, and then convince him to stop trying without the app - makes me extremely doubtful about its positive impact on the mood of the player. SHOOTER • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (strongly recommended for release stress) • Mind on the App Store If you like simplicity, look elsewhere; this sci-fi number blends elements of double-stick shooters, tower defense, and real-time team strategy into an intimidating set. The heart of the game are bots: at the beginning of each level you decide which bots you will use and where they will start, customize their load-out and give them simple orders. Then press the start button and watch them face the enemy and try to meet the victory conditions. But it's not completely hands-off. Your driver is also there and can wander around joining with a (reckless) gun or climbing into a vehicle or mech (better). Some will definitely like it, but I found the difficulty curve cliff-like and struggled to get into the game. STRATEGY /SHOOTER • Age 12+ • 1-2 players • Supports hardware controllers • Decoherence on the App Store Stealth puzzler where a spy tries to negotiate a series of levels without being spotted. The key is to observe the routines of the guards and slide over when the time is right (with the occasional assistance of throwable bait objects) and in this sense it reminded me a little of Hitman Go, only in real time instead of in turn. The problem is that touch accuracy/responsiveness sometimes disappoints you when you run and using a joypad isn't much better because it controls a cursor, not your character. It can be hard to see what's going on, also because you don't have any control over the camera. The security footage images are beautiful, with orange details (such as watchlines when you're spotted) popping up against the grainy mono background. But there isn't much substance here, since there are only 15 levels at the time of writing and all but the last 3 or 4 are simple to fix – failures are much more likely to be a tap that doesn't register as too diabolical a puzzle, and that's a shame. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Operator 41 on the App Store In the world of board games, critics sometimes talk about a pasted theme, when an abstract concept is elimented with a superficial narrative that doesn't really connect to the way the game actually plays. Which brings us to the pleasant puzzle based on Secret Oops! times, which is supposed to protect a clumsy spy, but it's actually about pressing colored buttons at the right time, just like the 80s toy Simon. Special Agent Charles, a gentleman of limited intellect, will get confused in lasers, security cameras, and booby traps unless you disable them at the right time... tapping them on your iPhone. Which doesn't make much sense. But that doesn't stop being funny, and the animation and (non-verbal) voice that plays when the spy is captured is undeniably funny. The controls are fiddly and the in particular they feel slightly insensitive. It's also hard to get a clear view of what you're doing, whether you're running in the real world using AR mode (very interesting) or winking at non-AR mode vertically and finding that you can't rotate the layer while zooming in. On the other hand, embarrassment might be the point: as in Surgeon Simulator or Spaceteam, much of the fun comes from desperately, and often failing, trying to perform simple tasks under pressure. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers, but it's embarrassing and not recommended at all • Secret ops! on the App Store The central gimmick - that all riders have marble instead of legs - is not enough to save this action slasher from being generic. Marble or not, you trudge, hammer the attack button when villains appear, try to find treasure chests, and occasionally fight a boss. The JRPG-style scene graphics are pretty nice, but nothing really stands out. The characters adapt to the usual RPG archetypes without being rounded in any way, and the levels reserve few surprises. Also, having played games like Slash Quest where coins are collected automatically, it seems unnecessarily laborious to have to go back after killing monsters to collect fallen loot. Give us a break! PLATFORMER • Age 9+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers • Marble Knights on the App Store It's ice hockey three-on-three, but here's the problem: Players are attracted to five different sports, so your team might be made up of a baseball pitcher, a quarter back of the NFL, and a football center. It's a bit like that old TV show where Kevin Keegan fell off a bicycle, just a lot more Us-centric. I wish they could find room for Ben Stokes or Ronnie O'Sullivan. Unfortunately, it has never been explained why all American sports have been bent in ice hockey, nor why some of the participants are actually hockey players - surely they would win every game with ease? Presumably the overwhelming dumping of information from a tutorial at the beginning of the game left no room for plot exposure. The game itself is fun but surprisingly complicated, with all sorts of maneuvers and special moves to memorize. It's not easy to press the right touchscreen button at speed and playing on a hardware controller (which is recommended) leaves you without too much guidance. SPORT • Age 4+ • 1-2 players • Supports hardware controllers • Ultimate Rivals: The Rink on the App Store Cute puzzle game in which you organize function blocks (change direction, jump, accelerate etc.) in the correct training to get a robot from point A to point B. All this is quite pleasant except for a curious wait and see. Your performance at each level is partially assessed based on the time it takes, and the average player will obviously take this (and the big countdown as a starting point for running. This is in contrast to the thoughtful spirit of most puzzle games and the fact that you can't stop and think about a level - there are two different pause options, but one keeps the watch running and the other hides the blocks - makes it a bit stressful. Working against this, the game itself is annoyingly slow in reassembling/reassemble every time you start or restart a level: robots germinate the wheels and drive to their starting points, the blocks quietly fall into place, and none of this is ignorable. Fast rebobs are vital for non-annoying puzzle games, and the game ends up being pretty frustrating. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers • The reality of Rosie on the App Store No collection of games that you respect is complete without a few mini games; Arcade has this, and Big Time Sports. SMMP offers ten things to do, all simple and strange, ranging from pogo-sticking on lava to dynamite jui jing. This simplicity is both a strength and a weakness, since you get the blockage of everything almost immediately, but then (when played solo) tire of it quite quickly too quickly. No doubt he would have had a more sustained interest when playing with his teammates, but unfortunately I was unable, despite trying several times, to find a party to join. It's nice that you have the chance to join a random group (something Pac-Man Party Royale badly misses) as well as connecting with friends by code, but right now there doesn't seem to be a player base big enough to make this a realistic option. Platformers tend to fall into two categories: the thrill rides of the pants seat and those where you need a map. This is the second type. So no, it's not exactly one for adrenaline junkies. The jump mechanism - the sine qua non seasoning here not of the genre, you might think - is also curiously slow and fluctuating, rather than the zippy bounce you get in something like Rayman Mini. This is frustrating when a boss keeps tagging you mid-jump. Ironically, the game's central gimmick boosts speed: an ever-present 30-second timer will kill you if you can't restore it by hitting the next checkpoint in time. But given that syrup jump button, not to mention the exploratory thought requirement, it's an incongruous (if funny) inclusion. PLATFORMER • Age 4+ • Single player only • Support hardware controllers • Jumper Jon on the App Store This puzzle premise is fine: you need to get a character from point A to point B on a piece of paper from a neat combination of bending, rotating and turning. It's all the other things that don't work. Touch controls often don't respond (I recommend a joypad), while the character's movement, presumably for dramatic effect, is heavy. And while I'm sure the feelings of the game are genuinely understood - its story is about the difficulties of a long-distance relationship - they are delivered in a way that is cheesy and sad. More annoyingly, the game has shown a tendency from time to time (and repeatedly, at a point near the end of Chapter 6) to slide back to the main menu. The problem is not that you lose a lot of progress in the puzzle, but that you have to sit through the indisputable intro bit again – and if you found the story engaging once (which I didn't do, but could), you certainly won't find it that way on the third or fourth delivery. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • Player only • Supports hardware controllers • A Fold Apart on the App Store When the adventure begins, Various Daylife turns out to be a relatively conventional turn-based party RPG, although with a confusing combat system. But venturing is a very small part of this game. Most of your time is spent in the city, taking jobs (sometimes hilarious) in increments of stats and money. Note that you don't actually need to do the job, or even see it happen; just choose it from the menu screen, then wait for the message announcing whether you were successful or not. The graphics and sound of the game are not surprisingly of the highest quality, and I like how experimental and strange everything is as a concept. But there's no way to get away from the fact that this is basically a pretty boring way to spend your time. The look and sound of this tasteful puzzle is superb, but it has too many issues for a direct recommendation. Which is a real shame, because the idea of a Lego-based puzzle game is extremely attractive. First, the controls and camera are inconvenient; I played the game from start to finish and at no point did I feel really used to them. It's hard to see what exactly you're doing and where exactly the piece you're holding will be placed, and while you can rotate the view a bit, it will return to the default view at an uncomfortable time. There's no zoom. In addition to this, there is a kind of dishonesty in many puzzles - although it is of a type that is relatively common in games of this type. I strongly feel that it should be possible to guess the solution to a puzzle that works entirely from the clues and visible components (and the internal logic of the game), but very often you are instead trying to guess what arbitrary action the level will provoke in giving you the extra bricks necessary for the solution. PUZZLE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (which make controls a bit easier) • Lego Builder's Journey on the COLORFUL but slightly forgettable turn-based RPG App Store set in Steven's universe, er. It's divided into levels, unusually, and your job is to fight the villains (controlling a team of four characters), solve puzzles, and find secrets. The above puzzles are quite beautiful: it's about moving mirrored stones to reflect beams of light on color-coded pyramids. But the fight is quite the same, because you get a set number of action points each turn regardless of the number of characters still alive and the temptation (and apparently the best tactic) is to spam the best attacks and ignore the weaker characters. There are many attacks and objects, but I couldn't find interesting combos or synergies; if there's depth of play here it's not quick to announce if And as for the plot, I found it somewhere absurd and non-existent. Maybe those familiar with the TV show will get more out of it. RPG • Age 9+ • Single player • Supports hardware controllers • Unleashed light on the one-on-one beat 'em up App Store of a type rarely seen on iOS. So Punch Planet has news if nothing else. The cyberpunk cartoon graphics are great and I love the atmosphere. But there is not much variety: there are only six characters and I have only seen four arenas, one of which is a training camp almost without features. Perhaps more will be unlocked later in the game or added in a future update. There aren't even many special moves and I found some aspects of the gameplay a bit weird. The tactic jumped over my head and you make a flying kick from behind that I (over) used in every combat game I've ever played doesn't work, for example, with sprites seemingly unable to change direction in mid-air. But it looks pretty fast and listed, and it's a pretty pleasant distraction. FIGHTING • Age 12+ • 1-2 players • Supports hardware controllers (and using one is practically essential) • Punch Planet on the lovable and attractive App Store Platform that suffers from a (thematically understandable) lack of speed and occasionally lanous collision detection. It actually becomes easier when played on a hardware controller, since you no longer need to scroll to change direction. Be aware that the confirmation action can be mapped to the menu or a similar button, rather than the expected X or A. PLATFORMER • Age 4 + • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Way of the Turtle on the App Store This breathtaking-looking platformer distinctly resembles Limbo, which is not bad; but while that game used shadows to evoke an atmosphere of terror, Projection seems more magical. It is set in a world of shadow puppets: the key is to manipulate the light source to create and transform shadows to move around the levels. It's a smart gimmick, but it takes a while to move on and the method of control - as on Limbo, to be honest - is a bit frustrating, and the shadows occasionally glitchy. PUZZLE / PLATFORMER • Age 9+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Projection: first light on the attractive and popular skateboard Sim App Store of the creators of Alto's Adventure and similar to. Images and music hold and relax generate bags of atmosphere and there are plenty of special tricks and character customizations to unlock. I would like to add, however, that a 2D skating game loses the exploratory aspect of a Tony Hawk-style offering: stairs, ramps, rails etc. are brought to you in automatic sequence rather than having to be discovered. And squares like me might find that all skateboard moves look pretty much the same if made as realistically as they are here. SPORT • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Skate City on the Sonic the Hedgehog App Store refuses to go on the long night; not only is the lightning curl featured in a new movie coming out next year, but there's an endless stream of Sonic-themed games available for devices and tablets. The latest is Sonic Racing, a cartoon driver who draws a series of parallels with what many consider the OG game of its kind: Mario Kart. You can compete with 15 characters from the sonic franchise on 15 maps and unlock 15 tufts to give you the edge in races, whether it's accessing upgraded boost pads or the ability to suck up nearby coins. The thing other than Mario Kart is the availability of teams; in Sonic Racing, race in teams of three with each character offering unique buffs to help out when needed. It's fun, but with coin collection a requirement for upgrades, it's easy to see that it was designed with IAP in mind, even if they're not available on Apple Arcade. With Mario Kart now officially available for iOS, is there a place for clones? Some might say yes, but we're going with the No. Lewis Painter DRIVING • Age 4+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers • Sonic Racing on the App Store If you've ever played the floor it's baby lava - which is perhaps more of an American thing than British - then this game will press all kinds of nostalgia wild buttons in your brain. In this case, of course, there is no need to use the wonderful power of a child's imagination because the floor is literally lava, and it is up to you to navigate around the rooms and levels through hanging furniture, brackets and pipes and so on. It's a great idea (and the aesthetics of Saturday morning cartoons are lovely), but the first-person 3D perspective makes it hard to jump accurately. A controller helps, though. PLATFORMER • Age 4+ • 1-4 players • Supports hardware controllers • Hot Lava on the App Store The App Store description states that this is a mixture of pinball and tower defense, but interpreting each of these genres in such a way goes risks losing their respective best qualities. There's no satisfaction in building a balanced defensive setup - you're just destroying zombies as they walk towards you - and the pinball machine lacks jeopardy and speed. It's as soon as possible to lose the ball, which slows down and shows a targeting vector when it's on the paddle – so there's really no excuse not to hit that zombie that comes right in the face. In fact, the only time things get risky is when the ball hangs by bouncing between objects somewhere far away on the screen (which in the traditional pinball machine is the time of bonanza for your score), leaving you helpless against the nearest villains. This leaves aside the fact that the story is boring and sometimes barely understandable, but also strangely prominent. I'd rather play pinball, even if it's slightly pedestrian, than touch cartoon chatter screens. ARCADE • Age 9+ • Single player only • No controller support (at least, worked with mine, although the interface changes suggest it should) • Zombie Rollerz: Pinball Heroes on the Workmanlike Sports Sim App Store with some good qualities (cheerful graphics, accessible gameplay) but a of serious annoyances. Pitching is rewarding because there are so many variations (batting is a completely simpler affair), but it's marred by a pitching team's bizarre inability to last a default 3-inning game without exhausting divers/collapses from exhaustion. Adding insult to injury, granting a home run triggers an unbearable gloating animation that I could have really lived without seeing five times a game. SPORT • Age 4+ • 1-2 players • Support hardware controllers • Ballistic Baseball on the App Store's Word game where you make your way through literary classics, rearranging confusing phrases and touching spelling mistakes. Aesthetically adorable, and I wanted to like it so much - but while the idea seems to be that you get a new love for literature by playing with its component parts, my experience was that I jumped on the surface instead. And in the end, it's a little boring. WORD • Age 12+ • Single player only • No controller support • Dear reader on the App Store Puzzle of words relaxing but extremely use ambitious for commuters. Each level presents you with about 6-8 letters or groups of letters, and your job is to thread a lace between them to form a word connected to the accompanying image. I found it slightly frustrating that sometimes you'll find a word that fits the letters and image but isn't the right answer, and post-level inspirational messages can be cloying. But it is not unpleasant in any way. WORD • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers, but it's really weird • Word Laces on the App Store I do my best to give each of these games a nice crack of the whip, but this exasperating action platformer was so unseathful that I couldn't get past the first level, despite numerous attempts. The premise is pretty nice - a sketchy society is spiders and cross-dinosaurs, with predictably pericular results - but the introductory exposure (though superbly dubbed) is too long. Be sure to locate the skip everything button. And the game itself, while bringing back to Golden Age platformers like Contra and Mega Man, is deeply frustrating: the controls are weird and clumsy (both on screen and hardware), and it has a tendency to do cruel and/or glitch things like generating you on a lower ledge that is no longer visible. Spidersaurus is tough, which is fine, but it feels unfair, which it's not, and I'm not interested in banging my head against this particular brick wall anymore. SHOOTER • Age 12+ • 1-2 players • Supports hardware controllers • Spidersaurus on the App Store This ultra-serious investigative mystery is named after a McGuffiny computer that tells the police where to go next. Should this indicate an element of science fiction? Honestly, you knows, but the explanation in the middle of the heart and waving by hand of the thing the whole game takes its name feels emblematic of its general problems. Every time you arrive at a new scene you are required to interview witnesses, explore area, tap the objects, and (on a neat screen of the mind map) tracks the connections between the clues. All these actions can open up new dialogue options and, in the end, enough evidence to make you an indictment. The scenes themselves look nice, but the character's animation is shonky and exasperatingly slow: tap somewhere and it takes an age for the detective to get there, often taking a scenic route around an object that seems walkable and/or stopping along the way to start a conversation with someone because you touched vaguely near them. Many interesting-looking objects, on the contrary, are not captable - there is what looks like an improvised grave at the second crime scene, but apparently it is not significant - and the dialogue is clumsy and repetitive. Tangle Tower and Jenny LeClue are both investigative games performed much better on Arcade, and they are much more fun. DETECTIVE/ADVENTURE • Age 12+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers (it's a bit embarrassing but makes zoom/rotate actions easier) • Murder Mystery Machine on the App Store This high-speed puzzle looks ugly, but more troubling is full of freemium-esque behavior. Every time you die, the game reminds you that you can spend coins to restart from a checkpoint; you do almost everything for the first time and the game rewards you with a skin for your hexagonal sprite, which then torments you to use. You can't spend real-world money on coins and skins in Hexaflip, or any Apple Arcade game; but it is quite obvious that this was originally designed with the grubbing up of money in mind. And this manifests itself in more fundamental ways for gameplay than cosmetic add-ons – such as the over-useful tutorial and too shallow difficulty curve, both presumably intended to keep bettors in the game (and potentially spend money) as long as possible. This is a shame because Hexaflip's central mechanics - tapping left or right to flip a hexagon through an obstacle course as fast as possible - is fun and, once it goes on, really challenging. I just wish a less mercenary (or mercenary-apparent) game could be built around it. ARCADE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Hexaflip on the App Store Oversized sprites are a visual delight, but in terms of gameplay this looks like a filler, largely following Daley Thompson's Decathlon tradition of tapping buttons to match timers, or simply as fast as possible. Some events, such as football and golf, are great fun, but most are pretty boring. SPORT • Age 4+ • Single player only • Supports hardware controllers • Big Time Sports on the Frogger App Store in Toy Town is the Arcade game funny that I've ever tried so far. How strange that Apple chose it as the highlight for the service. Yes, it's Frogger, only with modern graphics and some concessions to modern gaming conventions. It's not terrible, in any way - I suspect Apple won't allow any stinking on Arcade - and it certainly looks like But it's not exactly exciting. More importantly, swipe/tap controls aren't responsive enough to induce the sense of narrowly escaped jeopardy that was so fundamental to the charm of the original. Using a hardware controller makes things a little bit better. And I was getting slightly bored before I got to the end of the first level. ARCADE • Age 4+ • Single player only • Support hardware controllers • Frogger in Toy Town on the App Store Want to know more about iOS games? We have separate roundups of the best free iPhone games and the best free iPad games. And on the accessories side, read our guide to the best iOS game controllers. Controller.

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