

# DISKoveries

## Special Needs: New Software, Books, DVDs and Professional Resources

By Joan Tanenhaus

**Boardmaker Version 6 for Macintosh** (Mayer-Johnson: 800-588-4548, [www.mayer-johnson.com](http://www.mayer-johnson.com)) Boardmaker Version 6 is now available for Macintosh in two different versions, Boardmaker Plus and Boardmaker with Speaking Dynamically, with all of the features of the Windows versions. Boardmaker has always been the standard of excellence for creating printed classroom and at home materials with Picture Communication Symbols (PCS). Now Boardmaker Plus! for Macintosh lets Boardmaker activities come alive on the computer with voice, animation and video support, and with Boardmaker, more than 4500 PCS and over 300 ready-to-use templates for schedules, AAC and calendars. Some of the new features of Boardmaker Plus Version 6 include a Symbolate function which lets you just type your words and symbols appear, and a quick and easy way to add symbol support to sentences, stories and other text. Copy and paste in a paragraph, sentence, story, etc. and watch it get paired word for word with PCS symbols. Then it can be read aloud with highlighting of the words or of the symbol and word. Other features include the ability to create a transparent background that allows symbols to be layered to create free-form materials. You can swap and shuffle buttons, drag and drop images from the Internet or other programs, draw freeform buttons of any shape, and resize multiple buttons. The MJ Sounds Library contains dozens of fun sounds, and there is video and animations support along with the ability to play movies and sound files and record speech. Boardmaker with Speaking Dynamically for Macintosh is augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) software that lets you do all the same things as Boardmaker Plus, and also includes the ability to create customized "talking" communication boards. Boardmaker with Speaking Dynamically Pro turns a computer into a talking word processor, a speech output device and a powerful student-learning tool. It has the ability to talk in human-

sounding voices and play recorded sounds and movies – with word prediction, abbreviation expansion capabilities, Symbolate, support for 44 languages and much more. Visit [www.mayer-johnson.com](http://www.mayer-johnson.com) for User Sharing Forums, Free Tips, Activity of the Month downloads, new PCS, upgrade information and online training.

**Interactive Reading Software Library 1 and Library 2** (Attainment/Greenhouse: 800-327-4269, [www.attainmentcompany.com](http://www.attainmentcompany.com); 661-263-7661, [www.greenhousepub.com](http://www.greenhousepub.com)) These programs (Windows only) are based on the excellent Interactive Reading Book Series published by Greenhouse Publications. (See full reviews of these wonderful books

in DISKoveries in CTG April 2007 and October 2005). For each book, there are four activities. In Matching, there is one large card and multiple (three to eight, you decide) smaller cards to choose from to match. In Identification, similar in design to Matching, the large card shows only the printed word and the match choices show only the image. The Labeling activity shows a card and records the student's verbal response. In Reading, a sentence is shown and read aloud. The student recreates the sentence by selecting the matching cards to fill in the boxes. You can track progress, and scanning is available. The books in Library 1 include: How Many?, What Color Is It?, I Go To School, Things



Interactive Reading Software (Attainment / Greenhouse Publishint).

I Do At Home, Actions!, Sounds Good to Me!, The Ups and Downs of Opposites, and How Do I Feel? The books in Library 2 include: I Have Feelings, Tool, What Happened and Why?, Pigs in Space, Who's on First?, Meet the Word Family, What's It For?, What Do I Say?, and What Do I Do? These are outstanding programs and can be used by students of all ages for language and literacy learning.

**Story Builder** (Judy Lynn Software: 732-390-8845, [www.judylynn.com](http://www.judylynn.com)) Story Builder, for Windows (2000, XP and Vista) is a storybook program that lets switch users create picture story books from templates and read them aloud in a simple and errorless way. Students write their books by choosing pre-written picture and text pages related to a topic that they pick. They can choose to include or skip a particular page in their book and they can control the path that the story takes. (For example, in a story about a class trip, they can choose to write about going to the zoo or going to the aquarium. Once there, they can decide which animals to include.) Story Builder comes with 25 different story templates and there are almost 30 additional ones that can be downloaded free. Teachers and parents are encouraged to also upload stories they have created to share with others, so there will be more coming. In the Users Guide, there are detailed instructions on creating your own templates. The program also prints out the storybooks and collects data for each student that can be viewed in a spreadsheet or text format. If you go to the Web site, you can download a free trial of Story Builder to try for 20 times. This is a very creative program and one that can be used to encourage literacy in all children. Judy Lynn Software can always be depended on to create well-designed and highly motivating software for our youngest switch users.

**The Learning to Get Along Series** (Attainment: 800-327-4269, [www.attainmentcompany.com](http://www.attainmentcompany.com)) Another great new program. This software includes 14 talking books with activity pages. The stories are designed to help young children, ages 4-8, learn to behave responsibly and respectfully toward themselves and others. (The books are also available in print form.) The software reads the books aloud (natural speech or a slower word-by-word speech), highlighting the text (one word at a time, by sentence or by line). There are glossary words that can be clicked to hear a definition. The Next and Back buttons move forward or backward through the story. Immediately following each story is a screen "Think About It," that sums up the message of the book. There are also screens following that with multiple choice questions. You can customize the program by selecting individual stories for each user, along with highlighting and narration style. Scanning and progress tracking are available. Some of the book titles are: Be Careful and Stay Safe, Be Polite and Kind, Join In and Play, Know and Follow Rules, Take Turns, and many

more. See the Web site for a complete listing of the books and also an excerpt from one of the books. Highly recommended.

**Play with Me** (Life Tool, available from Mayer Johnson: 800-588-4548, [www.mayerjohnson.com](http://www.mayerjohnson.com)) Young children who use a switch need lots of practice with cause and effect and timed activation skills. This new program presents six fun activities that will motivate and entertain as they teach. In the first activity, little birds are learning to fly. Children press and hold the switch to open the net to rescue falling birds. In the Mole game, they press the switch as soon as they see a mole appear in order to turn on the light on his helmet. In Snakes Duel, press a switch to throw a piece of melon or to duck and avoid getting hit. In Hen House Race, press the switch in time to change the position of the basket to catch falling eggs. In other games, play ball with seals or soccer with monkeys. There are five levels of difficulty and users play alone (against the computer) or with a second player. Great program for children. Pablo, also from Life Tool, is a coloring and copying program. Children press and release a switch to color a picture (cause and effect) or use color selection (i.e., color changes at a rate you select and child presses when he sees the color he wants). There is a copying activity (see the picture on the left and make the picture on the right the same). There are also a coloring activity and a copying activity with the mouse.



*Play with Me by Life Tool, available from Mayer-Johnson.*

**Preschool Playtime Volume 1 and Volume 2** (Social Skill Builder: 866-278-1452, [www.socialskillbuilder.com](http://www.socialskillbuilder.com)) Two excellent new programs in this series, for Windows and Macintosh, designed for preschool to 1st grade, to develop play skills, social emotions and appropriate behavior, using real life videos and social stories. Designed like others in this series, there are five different skill levels. Level 1 familiarizes the user with critical elements of a behavior or social interaction. Level 2 introduces a variety of behaviors and interactions for identification of positive and negative consequences. Level 3 presents multiple choice questions to help identify important behaviors. Users chose what the child did correctly during the interaction.

Level 4 presents still images to identify facial expressions and feelings. Level 5 challenges the user to predict what should be done or said. Following a video clip, the question is asked "what should the child do next – with choices. In both volumes, the settings are the Park, an Outing, Playgroup and Preschool. Data is tracked and reports can be printed. Preschool and social games are also provided in step-by-step presentation (i.e., Ring Around the Rosey ). In Volume 1, the social interactions are: greetings, clean up, please/thank you, waiting, coping, interrupting and shifting attention. In Volume 2, the social interactions are: apologizing, taking turns, listening, playing, personal space, sharing and requesting.

**Do2Learn** ([www.do2learn.com](http://www.do2learn.com)) This excellent Web site has been designed to provide computer-based learning for children with special needs. It has an activities section with suggestions for art projects, card games, math helpers, writing tools, etc., all with instructions and things needed for off-computer work. There is a section with Songs (fire safety, mall safety and street safety) and Games to play online. In addition, there is software to purchase and download. These are excellent programs for reinforcing language. **Placing Objects** is great for learning prepositions, such as on, under, in, next to, beside, between, and others. There are four environments to choose from (kitchen, bedroom, etc.) and children are instructed to put the object in the named place (i.e. between the boy and the basket). Videos of actual people reinforce concepts. Performance and progress is tracked and printable activities are included. In **What's The Order**, children can work on concepts, such as first...then and before... after, while completing two- or three-step sequences. A video is shown to reinforce the concept and then players move the pictures to sequence the activity. There are many options to include different sequencing vocabulary (i.e., in the beginning, finally, last, at the end, following that, etc.) There are printable activities. **Name That Object** works on naming, understanding and categorizing common objects. All pictures can be printed as 1-inch or 2-inch picture cards. There are other programs on Alphabet, Faces and Feelings, Fire Safety, Pet, Playground and Water Safety. All programs are Mac and Windows.

**SwitchIt! Transport Extra and SwitchIt! Dinosaurs Extra** (Inclusive: 800-462-0930, [www.inclusivetlc.com](http://www.inclusivetlc.com)) Inclusive has added two new programs to its wonderful SwitchIt! Extra Series. Like all the other SwitchIt! programs, for both Macintosh and Windows, each program includes Flash Cards, Builds (picture is presented as an outline and each switch press fills in the colors and then animates it) and Stories (clever sequences that are revealed with each press of the switch). There is an auditory scanning option for the Picture Builds and Stories menu so users can select the sequences they want to play. Student progress can be tracked, and

other options include the ability to select which specific flash cards, picture builds and stories are selected. The programs also include Resources, worksheets and additional interactive programs. There are also Braille and tactile activities which can be photocopied onto swell paper and put through a heat machine to make them tactile.

**SwitchIt! Transport Extra** includes pictures and sequences related to transportation, including school bus, taxi, motorcycle, boats, planes, construction vehicles, etc. **SwitchIt! Dinosaurs Extra** includes all kinds of dinosaurs, behaviors, habitats, etc. The content is designed so that it can be used at multiple language levels. Early learners can learn basic facts about dinosaurs, while more advanced students can talk about camouflage, changing environments, predators and prey. All SwitchIt! Extra programs are highly recommended!

**MyBoard** (Inclusive: 800-462-0930, [www.inclusivetlc.com](http://www.inclusivetlc.com)) MyBoard is an authoring program for making all kinds of drag and drop activities with pictures and text, for whole class lessons, individual instruction, for literacy, for interactive WhiteBoard and Touch Window use, too. It includes a 10 minute tutorial on creating activities. The program includes many sample activities to get you started and to give you an idea of the range of lessons that can be created. There are lots of learning activities (dress the boy, shapes, build a Spaceship, sorting activities with venn diagrams, number activities, copying and tracing activities and much more). The program is for Windows 2000, XP and Vista. Visit [www.itmyboard.com](http://www.itmyboard.com) to see examples of activities and get more information. Excellent!!!

**Choose and Tell: More Nursery Rhymes** (Inclusive: 800-462-0930, [www.inclusivetlc.com](http://www.inclusivetlc.com))

The third in this clever series, this latest program presents some popular nursery rhymes and then lets the user create their own story. The rhymes are Little Bo Peep, Mary Mary Quite Contrary, Little Jack Horner, Yankee Doodle and Pussy Cat. Players decide where they go, how they travel and what they do when they get there. The program encourages decision making, using a combination of cause and effect and choice-making activities. After the nursery rhyme is presented, the program presents two or three modes of transportation (randomly chosen from a group of five); two or three locations (from five different ones) and some treasures. Other choices include the kind of monster that takes the treasure and a solution on how to get the treasure back. The story can be replayed and printed. Options include how many choices to be offered (two or three), switch and scanning access, and auditory scanning. This is a fun program for young children and encourages choice making, switch use, and understanding of language and sequencing. Other programs in the series include **Nursery Rhymes, Fairy Tales and Legends**.

**Early Learning Suite 2.1** (Marblesoft: 888-755-1402, [www.marblesoft.com](http://www.marblesoft.com)) The Early Learning Suite contains three of Marblesoft's

classic programs, Early Learning 1, Early Math Skills and Money Skills. Each program, with large, clear and simple graphics, has a range of activities with dozens of difficulty levels and is age appropriate for all ages. Students can use the mouse, touch window or single switch with scanning and there is full record management.

Other options allow control of advancement rate, amount of prompting and reinforcement and how the programs respond to wrong answers. **Early Learning 1** teaches colors (matching, recognition and identification of 12 colors – you select which ones to use); shapes (12 different shapes to chose from); numbers (practice counting numbers from 0-20, with color icons or optional high visibility icons and special prompts for blind students); and letters.

**Early Math Skills** teaches addition and subtraction of simple equations in either a horizontal or vertical format, with options to select sums from 0-20. The program uses large color icons (high visibility or black-and-white icons), number sequencing and greater than/less than. Money Skills teaches American, Canadian, European, British or Australian currency with clear, realistic pictures of the money. Teachers can modify or replace the graphics used in the program. The program teaches counting money by denomination. In the Counting Money activity, each coin or bill is introduced and students learn to count that denomination. Early levels include a number key to help the student count. Other activities include Making Change, Counting Change and the Marblesoft Store (save money and then go shopping to purchase items on display). If you go to the Web site, [www.marblesoft.com](http://www.marblesoft.com), you will see a complete description

and screen shots of many different activities with different levels shown and explained. You will see what the program actually looks like and how it advances from one level to another. Marblesoft has also updated its **Single Switch Games 2**. Watch for a review of that program in the next DISKoveries.

**Mini Mystery Readers Software** (Attainment: 800-327-4269, [www.attainmentcompany.com](http://www.attainmentcompany.com)) This is a great new program! It includes 24 high interest (fun) detective stories for students, reading level 2-3 and 3-4. There are interactive questions at the end of each story. The text on each page is spoken automatically after the page is turned. The speech is in a conversational tempo but can also be played at a slower, word-by-word tempo. Students can click on individual words to hear them spoken and can repeat the narration on individual pages. Narration highlighting (by word, sentence or line) is an option. There is a detailed user management section, with many options for data collection and options. There are scanning options for single or two-switch access. This is an excellent program for struggling readers, and for those needing supported reading, listening and comprehension skills. **Functional Skills System: Functional Literacy Sampler** is a drill-and-practice program designed to teach and review about 80 sight words. Players see the word, hear it spoken, then click to see a video demonstrating the word and hear a definition. There are two audio tracks (advanced or basic (simplified) definitions). There are many options to customize, including scanning/switch options.

**Yuichi's Games** (Mayer-Johnson: 800-588-4548, [www.mayerjohnson.com](http://www.mayerjohnson.com)) This Boardmaker



*Preschool Playtime from Social Skill Builder.*

add-on, designed to improve problem-solving, turn-taking, and literacy skills, is a set of games that can be customized by skill level and theme, and is accessible by touch window, mouse, scanning (step, inverse) and arrow keys. The nine games include **Concentration** (options include ability to substitute photos for PCS symbols, play with 2, 3,4,6, or 8 pairs of cards, play with face up for beginning matching game, optional speech feedback, written labels, etc.); **Guess The Word** (a variation of hangman – options include ability to add your own words, use of symbols that correspond to word as a hint, categories, etc. Always a good way to build spelling and vocabulary); **Maze-Craze** (maze game with on-screen arrows or arrow keys on the keyboard); and **Word Search** (five difficulty levels with varying size grids, create your own word searches). Others include **Number Slider** (move the numbers in the grid), **Shapetastic** (match pieces to shape outlines), **Tic-Tac-Toe**, **Four in A Row** and **Sing Along** (computer plays a sequence of notes and players replay the sequence). This is a great collection for your Boardmaker users!

**Animation-ish** (FableVision: [www.fablevision.com](http://www.fablevision.com)) This new drawing and animation program, designed for Grades K-12, for both Macintosh and Windows, is designed to help both students and teachers create and animate their drawings, stories and class projects. There are three levels of instruction. In Wiggledoodle-ish, students draw, trace and animate with three frames. You can import and trace graphics with different tools. In FlipBook-ish, students create their projects with any number of frames and with more advanced tools. Advanced-ish, the third level, lets you have two levels of anima-

tion so you can create an animated character (foreground) and an animated landscape (background). Sound and music can be added also. There is a Classroom Activity Guide also included.

**Watch Me Learn: Friends** (Watch Me Learn: 631-261-1707, [www.watchmelearn.com](http://www.watchmelearn.com)) Another excellent volume in the Watch Me Learn series (available in DVD format). This volume teaches social skills through the depiction of activities, such as playing catch, basketball, painting, snack time, charades, a treasure hunt, baking with friends and more. It is recommended for developmental ages 5 and up. Created by a mother of a child with autism, Watch Me Learn Video-Modeling products incorporate standards of socialization and communication (ABA/VB) in the context of authentic childhood situations. They present video sequences of play scenes and everyday situations and model the actions needed to communicate, with verbal responses, pointing, looking, etc. Children are encouraged to play the video over and over and to interact with parent/caregiver to practice the skills. Other DVDs in the series include **Watch Me Learn Volume 1** (gross motor skills – jump, clap, wave, touch, etc., imitation skills, pointing, attending, responding, receptive language, etc.); **Watch Me Learn Volume 2** (models attending skills, receptive language skills (identifying body parts, objects, people, following instructions, etc.) expressive language (labeling, asking “What’s That?” answers questions, etc.) and; **Watch Me Learn School Days** (sequences related to getting ready for school, organizing a book bag, getting on the bus, going to classes, interacting, etc.). If you go to the Web site, you can view

the teaching guides, which list all the activity scenes, and also view video clips from each of the DVDs. Highly recommended for home and classroom

**Rosetta Stone Language Learning Software** (Rosetta Stone: [www.rosettastone.com](http://www.rosettastone.com)) Interested in learning another language? Rosetta Stone software is available in over 30 different languages, for both Macintosh and Windows. It integrates graphics, audio, and text, which let the learner associate the written and spoken word with real-life pictures. Users are presented with a series of pictures and a word is spoken with text also being displayed on screen. They then select which picture goes with that word. The lessons progress from words to phrases and then to full sentences. Some of the units include Language Basics, Greetings and Introductions, Work and School, and Shopping. Some activities give the users the chance to practice new language with the included USB microphone headset. With the speech recognition abilities, users can practice and get immediate feedback. This is all done without any translation into English (immersion method). Rosetta Stone now also includes audio CDs that can be used to practice what the user has learned with the software. These CDs (good also with an MP3 player) can be used to practice pronunciation, vocabulary, phrases, speaking and conversation. If you are interested in applications for ESL, for home schooling or for reinforcing school second language learning, visit the Web site to see more details on languages available and specific examples.

## INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS FOR LEARNING

Interactive entertainment systems are a very important way that children, teenagers and adults of all ages interact with their siblings, family and friends. The most powerful applications are cooperative play and social, recreational and whole body interactivity. They are also great for language (following a story line, sequencing, etc.), fine motor and gross motor skills, timing and coordination.

The following Nintendo DS programs are especially useful for enhancing learning, challenging thinking skills, enhancing “brain power” and mastering vocabulary.

**Flash Focus** (Nintendo: [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com)) This fun DS program is based on focus ability training which includes: Dynamic Visual Acuity (the ability to clearly see moving objects); Momentary Vision (ability to gather several bits of information at once); Eye Movement (the ability to move your eyes quickly and accurately); Peripheral Vision (the ability to see over a wide area); and Hand-Eye Coordination (the ability to recognize and respond quickly and accurately). The program consists of both Training and Eye Relaxation exercises. Core Training includes things like tracking a moving box, watching a number flash and recalling it, remembering symbol order, watching a shape



Placing Objects from Do2Learn.

in the middle and finding others like it in their peripheral field, counting letters, matching, and more. In Sports training, you will do visual focus training within the contexts of soccer, baseball, boxing, table tennis, basketball, volleyball and football. After doing the training activities, the program will automatically give you a series of eye relaxation exercises. Visit [www.Flashfocus.net](http://www.Flashfocus.net) and pick How To Play to see animated examples of the activities. Good choice for all ages, and no reading required to do individual activities.

**Crosswords DS** (Nintendo: [www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com)) With crosswords, word searches and anagram games, players just write their answers in the puzzle using the stylus. There are four levels of difficulty and size. Clues are displayed in the upper portion of the screen, with a timer and hints available. In Wordsearch, you are given a list of randomly selected words to find. To highlight the words, you touch the first or last letter and slide over the entire word. In Anagrams, your goal is to create as many words as possible using a set of randomly selected letters. There are three game types (short: three- and four-letter words; medium: three-, four- and five-letter words; and long: three-, four-, five- and six-letter words). Great for vocabulary and literacy.

**Brain Assist** (Sega, [www.sega.com](http://www.sega.com)) This brain training program has 10 mini-games to challenge one to three users. They can match figures; touch number or letters in the order they were shown; find two of a kind from the displayed pictures; guess what a picture will look like from its broken parts; or spot the difference between two pictures. In other games, players memorize the locations and colors of painted hexagonal panels, and then paint the panels correctly. They memorize a set of numbers as they speed by and enter the numbers in the correct order. Other memory tasks include watching and comparing two sets of cards, or memorizing icons in the correct layout. Lots of fun for all.

**USA Today Crossword Challenge** (Destineer: [www.destineerstudios.com](http://www.destineerstudios.com)) This is a collection of crossword puzzles from the USA Today newspaper. There are 300 puzzles in English and 300 in Spanish. Touch a cell and clues across and down are shown on the top screen. You can enter with handwriting or by tapping the letters on an on-screen keyboard. You have a choice of immediate error spotting or final review. If you are stuck, ask for a hint and you are given the next letter.

The following Wii and DS programs are excellent ways for children and adults to interact, and provide opportunities for cooperative play, social, and recreational activities.

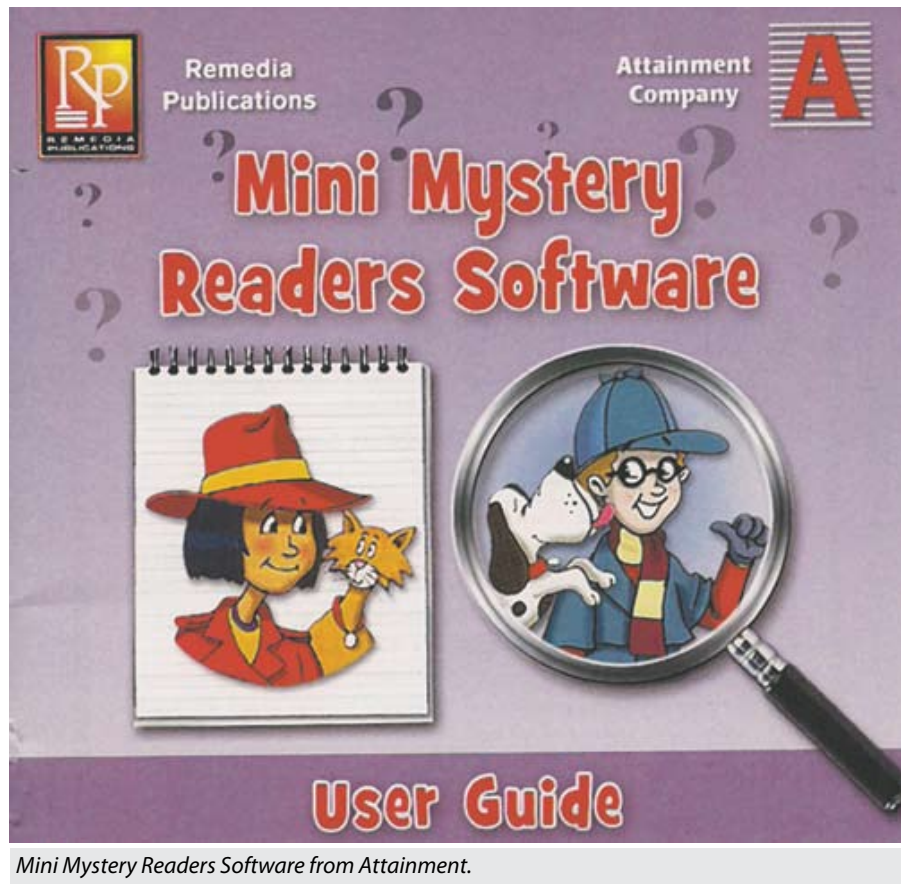
**Rock Band for Wii** (EA/Harmonix: [www.ea.com](http://www.ea.com), [www.rockband.com](http://www.rockband.com)) Wow, older children and adults of all ages will love this! Rock Band lets up to four friends form a band and play together. It includes a wireless guitar, a white set of drums, and a microphone. The drum set

has four pads, a kick pedal and real drum sticks. The Wii system also supports a second guitar, which can be purchased separately. In solo mode, aspiring musicians can sing, drum, or strum along to any song. These include classic rock, punk, 80s rock, alternative and modern rock, most performed by the original artists. The gameplay is similar to the other versions of Rock Band. To play the drums and guitars in the band, you try to keep up with the flow of notes by following color-coded cues on screen. Singers follow the stream of written lyrics on screen and match the words and pitch of the song in order to score points. There is a tutorial mode to help master the basics – pick your instrument and progress from beginner to star. In Practice mode, you can break down any part of a song at your speed and work on it. Both of these modes are excellent tools for players who want to work on skills independently or with support before joining the group! In Quickplay mode, you can pick any unlocked song and jam alone or with others. Solo Tour Mode lets a single player go on the road and Band World Tour Mode lets the whole band reach stardom. (Rock Band is rated T for mild suggestive themes in lyrics.) Rock Band is great for family fun and for peer interaction. The options for practice and tutorials make it very helpful for those who need additional assistance before entering full gameplay.

**Backyard Baseball 2009 for Wii and DS** (Atari/Humongous: [www.backyardsports.com](http://www.backyardsports.com))

Two great new Backyard sports programs!! Backyard Baseball, for both the Wii and the DS, features animated kid versions of the top MLB players (some favorites like Alex Rodriguez, Derek Jeter) and also one pro player from each of the 32 MLB teams. All 32 current MLB team uniforms and logos are included. Choose your favorite player and create your own team – from MLB, from the Backyard team or create your own. There are All Star Games and tournament modes, along with season and single game options, mini-games (Home Run Derby and Fielder's Challenge) and unlockables (there's an unlockable Babe Ruth!!). There are multiple levels of difficulty, and fun batting and pitching power-ups. With the DS, you use the button controls or the stylus. With the Wii, you use the Wii Remote to pitch and swing. You can also go behind the scenes and meet the players, view all-time records, access your trophy and watch the intro movie again. Backyard Baseball 2009 is an excellent choice in either format for young sports fans. It's great, not only for playing the game, but for learning the rules and good sportsmanship. A long-time favorite of parents and teachers, Backyard programs by Humongous have an excellent history of presenting kid-friendly, non-violent play within a scenario of cultural diversity.

**Wild Earth: African Safari** (Majesco: [www.majescoentertainment.com](http://www.majescoentertainment.com)) This is an excellent new Wii program – players can explore the wild,





Rock Band for Wii from EA/Harmonix.

take pictures of exotic animals in their natural habitats, run with herds of zebra and follow hunting lions. The Nunchuk is used to move, while you point the Wii Remote to choose the direction. There are 11 picture-taking missions (i.e. follow the hyenas, observe giraffes from a helicopter, meet a family of elephants, etc.). The Impact Meter tracks how much of a disturbance you are to the natural habitat. If you disturb too many animals or get too close to them, the Wii Remote rumbles at varying degrees. The program includes more than 30 African animals. Players

can drive the vehicle or take the pictures, and they can play alone or with one to three friends. Photos collected are placed in an animated slide show with informative articles. The Safari Game mode lets you use the Wii Remote to play 11 different arcade-type games, such as Elephant Wash (use the Wii Remote to aim the trunk and shoot water), and Meerkat Madness (whack-a-mole with the Wii Remote). Players will experience the flora and terrain from the Serengeti National Park in Africa at different times of the day and in varying weather conditions. The music and sound track is excellent, too. This is a great choice for family fun.

**Big Beach Sports for Wii** (THQ: [www.thq.com](http://www.thq.com)) This Wii program lets you play your favorite beach games right from your own house. Included games are: American football, volleyball, soccer, beach cricket, disc golf (golf played with a Frisbee) and bocce. You interact with each game with the Wii remote; for example, in cricket, you hold the remote like a bat and then mimic a swing to hit the ball. Up to four people can play each sport, and if it's a game that's played sequentially, you can share a single Wii Remote. The different sports can be played either as short games or as tournaments. Also from THQ, WALL-E for Wii and DS, based on the Disney/Pixar movie, let players re-live some of the movie's exciting parts, from the waste lands of Earth to the space cruiser. They can play as WALL-E or EVE, and

interact with the other robots and characters, while shooting, flying, racing and playing arcade style games. Fun for all ages, 6 and up.

**Guitar Hero DS** (Red Octane: [www.redoctane.com](http://www.redoctane.com) and [www.activision.com](http://www.activision.com)) This DS game comes with a four button grip that plugs into the Game Boy Advance slot of the DS. Players slide their hand through the adjustable wrist strap, cradling the DS in their palm. Notes scroll downward on the left screen and players push the corresponding buttons. They also use the included guitar pick-stylus to strum across the guitar that is displayed on the right screen. There are four difficulty levels – the higher the level, the more notes and more complicated patterns appear. There are 25 songs, most performed by the original artists. On a local wireless network, two to four players can join together to play in co-op mode, or challenge one another in a Guitar Duel. Players blow into the included microphone to extinguish a pyrotechnics effects gone wrong or use the touch screen to autograph a fan's shirt.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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*"The music and visuals are wonderful for engaging my students, including those with Autism and other disabilities.*

*I have had students that have refused to write, learn their letters and numbers on the computer because it is so engaging."*

*~ Laura Johnson, OTR*



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