



# Apps I use

Maria Cameron, an experienced app user, looks at which apps have stood the test of time and which new apps are now proving the most useful

When I was asked to write this article on how I use apps in my work, it made me reassess what I use and when I use them as well as doing a bit of an audit of what I have and perhaps haven't used for some time!

Developing listening comes high on my agenda and there are some lovely apps which can be used with effect with deaf children.

## Sound Touch

There are six categories covering farm animals, wild animals, birds, traffic, musical instruments and things in the home. Each item has five pictures with slightly different sounds so there are five types of dog with different barks. The pictures are photos of the real thing. I make it more auditory by letting the child listen before showing the picture. Sometimes I will have a choice of toys for them to match the sound to before seeing the picture. If they have the language they may name what they hear. I've also used it with primary children who have received their cochlear implant(s) later.

## Toddler's Seek and Find Picture Book

This comes with a couple of free scenes and you can then buy others. I use them for exploring sounds but also for following instructions e.g. two word level: 'can you find the cow and the pig'; higher level 'before you find the hens can you make the tractor go.' I adapt the language level for the child and the app is so appealing that their attention is good.

There are several of these picture books all of which are fun and I have found I can use flexibly.

## Learn and Touch Emotions (Alligator Apps):

I have found this really useful with a range of ages. There are four photos of different emotions per screen and the recorded voice asks you to choose a photo to match a specific emotion. I tend to extend this by talking about when the child felt like this, what happened and so linking the emotion word with a real situation for the child. Being able to record this somehow is important and this is where another app, **Notability**, comes into play. First I take a 'Screen grab' of the emotion pictures on the screen. This is done by pressing the home button and the power button at the same time thus taking a photo of what was on the screen. This is placed in photos and can then be imported into Notability.

**Notability** changes the iPad into a sort of interactive white board. I import pictures from screen grabs, photos, and Google images (press on picture and click save image. This then goes in Photos). It is then possible to annotate anything on the screen either by typing or writing with a stylus. There is also a facility to record so the child can record what they want to say and then listen back to it. For example, when doing some work on double meanings with a 10 year old we thought of different uses

e.g. dart: I threw a dart into the board.

The boy darted into the house.

We then found pictures on Google images to illustrate the different meanings, imported them into Notability, wrote the sentences, highlighted the key word, and recorded the child reading it. In terms of a multisensory input, the child had talked about the language, found visual images, supported this with writing, read it out and then listened again to the language. To finish off, the document can then be emailed to whoever supports the child. It gives me the opportunity for over learning in a fun way. This is one of the most flexible apps I use.

**Fun Decks** are apps based on the card decks resources produced by Fun Decks. They cover a whole range of vocabulary and language concepts. I have used a few of these on the iPad with primary aged children. The ones for 'was/were; is/are' have enabled the children to keep practising what can be mundane language with eagerness. I always get them to talk about whether the verb is past or present/one or more than one and read out the sentence in full to build up a feeling of how the language should sound.

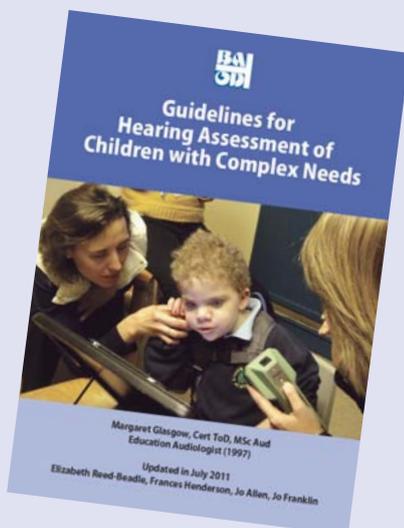
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**Flip flap Farm (a Nosy Crow app):** What a fun app this is! I have used it with primary children. It is based on a flip flap book where you can change the top or bottom half of the animal so a Mog is half mouse and half dog! There is a little two verse poem for each combo. In terms of phonics it's great because you can keep one half of the animal and just change the other half making a Gog (goat/dog), Tog, Squog, Shog... or keep the sheep and change the bottom: Shig, Shirrel, Shorse, Shurkey.... I have also encouraged the child to generate their own Flip Flap animals which is fun; it supports many skills including listening, phonological awareness, speech production, language and of course imagination.

**Toontastic:** I love this app and have used it very successfully to create different levels of therapy from social stories where the child has an input on how to change the behaviour to make it a better story to using the text from Macbeth to draw the scene from the battlefield. We then animated the characters, wrote and recorded the text and added mood music. I have used just a single scene up to a story with eight scenes depending on the child. It would be good for a small group to write a script and then create the scenes, animate and record their stories. There is a YouTube link from the app to look at what other people have done.

There are 'Speech and Language Therapy' apps which are more expensive and the ones I have found most useful are:

**Articulation Station:** I have used this with 4-11 year olds. It gives practice at single word, sentence and story level. There are words with the consonant at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the words. The child can record his or her own speech and listen back to it. At single word level you can use flashcards or have matching pairs. I have found the presentation of the app interesting for the children – it keeps their interest and attention for listening and rehearsal. I use a Bluetooth speaker with the iPad for better sound quality and this app that works well with this.

**ArtikPixFull** is similar.

**Minimal Pair Pack** gives a wide choice of minimal pairs. You select the pairs you want e.g. t and k and the app pulls up a range of pictures for discrimination practice. I have found that some children, depending on their hearing levels, need to hear me say the words 'Live' as well as hearing them on the iPad.

**Between the Lines levels 1,2,3** come in 'lite' versions to look at before buying. There are three sections relating to Who is talking (listening and facial expression); What is he saying? (Body language and Perspective taking), What does that mean? (Expressions, idioms and slang). I have found all the sections useful with the use of video, photos and voice. The accent is American but the content is good. Children have enjoyed listening to voices and deciding on age, sex, mood and then the meaning from the vocal

tone before looking at the choice of photos. The videos to interpret social interactions have been beneficial for those young people for whom this can be a challenge.

**My Playhome and Play stores.** Anyone who has heard me talk about apps knows how amazing My Playhome is. And now there are the shops as well!!! I use language at all different levels and this is often the one I use for informal assessment e.g. a simple four word sentence: 'Daddy needs an apple' and 'Mummy wants a cupcake'; or a much more complex sentence, 'Before you put the milk back in the fridge under the pizza, can you put baby in the highchair and give her a bottle.' Now the shops are there you can use it for extending auditory memory as you decide what to buy in each shop, rehearse the list and then have to remember from one shop to another. It's great fun!

I would like to thank Mark Varley, Speech and Language Therapist at St John's School for the Deaf, Boston Spa for inspiring me to use the iPad.

*Maria Cameron is a speech and language therapist/ Teacher of the Deaf who runs an independent Speech and Language Therapy Practice 'Steps2Speech'. She works with deaf children and young people currently from 2 to 22! Her work involves direct therapy including working closely with parents, independent assessments as an expert witness at tribunals and with The Ear Foundation.*

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