

CompuChild Chatter

December 2006
CompuChild USA

Even though it doesn't seem possible, the holiday season is upon us. Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa are almost here, and the days will begin to lengthen again after the winter solstice on the 21st. Are you shopping for gifts already? Did you know that there's some great FREE software out there for children? You don't even pay shipping—it's available for download!

1. Tux Paint, which children of all ages love, is a product of the Open Source community that has promoted free software for around 20 years. You can obtain your copy of Tux Paint here: <http://www.tuxpaint.org/>. Don't forget the stamps, too. There's also a Tux Typing program you might like: <http://tuxtype.sourceforge.net/>.
2. Marianne Wartoft offers some adorable free software: <http://www.wartoft.nu/software/>

There are also great places online to buy software inexpensively. You can find reviews here before you buy: <http://www.superkids.com/>. Then, see what these places offer:

- 🖱 www.planetcdrom.com
- 🖱 www.smart-estore.com
- 🖱 www.5dollarsoftware.com
- 🖱 www.smartkidssoftware.com (good specials)

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Study Shows Structured Computer-Use Provides Non-tech Added Value

In a study published in 2001, researchers reported on the value of computers in empowering "at risk" populations. In this study, supported by the US Dept. of Education's Community Technology Centers Program, researchers divided low-income, preschool-age children into two study groups. One group was given daily access to the computer as a "learning station," where the classroom teachers monitored use and provided instruction depending on their interests and abilities. The other group received weekly Instructor-led computer training that typically lasted 15-30 minutes. Results indicated that children from the Instructor-led training group made significant gains over the other group in the following areas:

- A larger working technology vocabulary,
- A greater understanding of how a computer operates,
- Increased computer skills,
- An increase in kindergarten readiness skills,

- More favorable attitudes towards learning,
- Increased self-esteem and self-confidence, and
- Improved social interactions with peers and adults.

Head Start teachers reported that "special" populations, (children with developmental delays, delays in speech and language or limited English, shy children, and children with behavioral problems) especially benefited from learning to use the computer. The study demonstrates that the use of computers in the preschool setting can have positive effects on both school readiness skills and social development. It also suggests that providing children with mere access to computers is not enough.

Primavera, Judy PhD, Wiederlight, Peter P., and Digiaco, Timothy M., "Technology Access for Low Income preschoolers: Bridging the Digital Divide." Fairfield University, CT.

These are some questions to ask your CompuChild (some are more advanced):

- 🖱 How do I make my name sparkle in MS Word?
- 🖱 Should I use the on-button to shut down the computer?
- 🖱 What's that bar across the bottom of the screen called?

Where can we go today? Check these out!



- 🖱 This site might be more interesting to older kids, but the former science teacher explains a lot of things that fascinate children: <http://www.grossology.org/>
- 🖱 The American Library Association (ALA) has a web page to take you to a world of possibilities: <http://www.ala.org/greatsites>
- 🖱 Lots of families already visit this site, but if you haven't yet, you're in for a treat: <http://pbskids.org/>