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## 2010 IPOD IPHONE

# BUYERS' GUIDE INTRODUCTION

The iPod and iPhone families are at a crossroads. In late 2009, Apple acknowledged that the growth of the touchscreen-based iPod touch and iPhone, aided by the surging App Store, has eroded interest in its less capable non-touchscreen iPods - the iPod shuffle, iPod nano, and iPod classic. Yet these music-centric models remain extremely popular in an absolute sense: millions of people bought Click Wheel iPods in 2009, and will enjoy using them for years to come. All things considered, how is your money best spent in these changing times?



iLounge's annual iPod + iPhone Buyers' Guide will help you answer that question, and many more. From the inexpensive iPod shuffle to the top-of-line iPod touch and iPhone 3GS models, we walk you through the good and bad of Apple's current lineup, as well as the accessories and software that you can use with them. Inside, you'll find the year's best picks for everything from \$5 games to \$100 earphones and \$600 speakers - plus freebies and budget-priced add-ons -- all honestly selected by our experienced editors without any influence from advertisers. Enjoy!

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# **2010** BUYERS' GUIDE

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As with all of our publications, what you'll find inside the 2010 iPod + iPhone Buyers' Guide is unique: a well-informed, honestly-reached collection of facts and opinions about the whole iPod and iPhone ecosystem. We have designed it to help you make smart purchases, not to sell you anything; it shows what's out there, and spotlights the very best options.

Hands-on testing is the basis of our findings. We spend hours pushing the boundaries of every new iPod and iPhone before publishing the world's most comprehensive reviews of each model, and have access to a massive pool of new accessories, applications, and games so that we can tell you what's great, good, okay, and bad. That, we do. Even though this Buyers' Guide focuses on the new products that are most worthy of your attention, we've tested lots of mediocre ones to save you time and money.

This has been an unusual year for iPod and iPhone add-ons. Hardware took a back seat to software - games and apps - as the iPod touch and iPhone reached new heights of popularity. New accessory releases slowed, and some developers faded away. Yet the flow of new iPods, iPhones, and add-ons continued, and we look at them all: new iPod shuffles, nanos, touches, and iPhone 3GS, plus tweaked iPod classic and iPhone 3G models, as well as leading accessories and apps for each.

We hope you enjoy this Guide. It is the product of many months of hard work, thoughtful consideration of the entire Apple marketplace, and a devotion to helping you get the very best value for your money. We are confident that the products featured here will bring you many happy days of entertainment.



Dennis Lloyd Publisher

A long-time fan of Apple products, **Dennis Lloyd** was a graphic designer and DJ before creating iLounge, which remains the world's most popular resource for iPod, iPhone, and iTunes users. Dennis is happily married with a dog, cat, many iPods, and a one-year-old daughter. He lives in Seattle, WA.



Jeremy Horwitz Editor-in-Chief

Jeremy Horwitz has written about iPods, iPhones, gadgets, games, and the companies that make them for everyone from Electronic Gaming Monthly to The New York Times, in addition to practicing law. Today, Jeremy focuses his days on iLounge, its Books, and Buyers' Guides. He lives with his wife, daughter, two dogs, and lots of add-ons in East Amherst, NY.



**Bob Starrett** is iLounge's Senior Editor. Based in Orlando, Florida, where he lives with his new wife, Bob braved lines for an iPhone 3G, and alternates between other iPods, including an iPod touch.



**Bob Levens** is iLounge's Chief Forum Administrator. Living in Cambridge, U.K. with his wife, Bob has served in both the Royal Air Force and the Ministry of Defense, and worked as an engineer.



Jesse David Hollington is an iLounge Forum Administrator and Contributing Editor, responsible for our Ask iLounge columns. He lives with his wife, baby daughter, and cats in Toronto, Canada.

Contributing Editors, Forum Administrators, and Moderators: Jerrod Hofferth, Mike McKenney, Alicia Bankhofer, Albert Tan, Audrey McGirt, Brett, Jed, Robert, Tom Levens, and Stuart VandeVenter.





**Clockwise from left:** Released in March, the third-generation shuffle received new colors in September, as Apple added video cameras and glossy bodies to iPod nanos. The iPhone 3GS bowed in June, adding speed and video recording.





#### iPod nano, iPhone 3GS Record Video, Others Lag

Odd tweaks to iPod shuffle + touch raise questions as classic, iPhone 3G remain alive

With CEO Steve Jobs on a six-month leave of absence, and the iPod and iPhone division switching engineering chiefs, Apple's pocket devices saw a string of surprising changes in 2009. They started with the March introduction of the third-generation **iPod shuffle** (2GB/\$59, 4GB/\$79), a small but buttonless slate that added the ability to speak the names of songs and multiple playlists, pilloried for its limited controls and headphone incompatibility. Soon thereafter, Apple introduced the iterative **iPhone 3GS** (16GB/\$199, 32GB/\$299), which preserved

the white and black plastic bodies of the **iPhone 3G** - kept alive at 8GB for \$99 - while adding an improved still and now video camera, more memory, and better chips for faster gaming, apps, and web loading. Rumors hinted that both the fifth-gen **iPod nano** (8GB/\$149, 16GB/\$179) and new **iPod touch** (32GB/\$299, 64GB/\$399) would get video cameras, as well, but only the nano did, with the touch receiving only speed and memory boosts due to component problems. Apple also bumped the **iPod classic** to 160GB for \$249, and dropped the slower 2008 8GB **iPod touch** to \$199.

#### A Redesigned Store, App Interface, and Home Sharing Features Enhance iTunes 9

Cleaner, simpler, yet more powerful: that was the theme behind the September release of iTunes 9, which notably received a streamlined new iTunes Store interface with a top-of-window navigation bar, as well as more animation and pictures. It now promotes iTunes LPs and iTunes Extras, Apple's DVD-like bonus

features for albums and movies, and the now roughly 100,000 applications in the App Store, which iTunes 9 now manages more effectively with Home Screen settings. Apple also added Home Sharing, to let 5 computers wirelessly and easily swap music, videos, and apps, a great feature.



Far more information on these and other topics of interest to the iPod and iPhone community is available from the iLounge.com news archives at ilounge.com/index.php/ilounge/archives/.

Now, there are more ways than ever to interact with and explore iLounge.com, home of the largest independent iPod/iPhone discussion forums + photo galleries.











# 1. Join Our Facebook and Twitter Pages

If you spend a lot of time on Facebook or Twitter and want to see what's new with iLounge - or just interact with fellow fans - it's time to add yourself to our lists. Facebook users can visit facebook.com/iloungecom, and Twitter users should follow "iLounger" to get minute-to-minute updates from iLounge's news, reviews, tutorials, and Backstage feeds.

#### 2. Follow Our Flickr Photostream + More

Whenever there's a new iPod or iPhone release, hit flickr. com/photos/ipodlounger/ for detailed comparison and unboxing photos; by comparison, our iPod and iPhone Galleries give readers the chance to submit photos and artwork celebrating the places where they live and visit, and the devices that have brought music to their lives.

#### 3. Talk With 180,000 Other Users in Forums

What's the difference between Apple's discussion forums and ours? History. We maintain an archive of over 1.5 million posts dating back to the 2001 launch of the first iPod, so you can find information on the newest iPods + iPhones, and useful advice on every older one, too. Over 180,000 users have registered to post; most people just browse.





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**Apple Store** 



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dexim DCA103



## BluePack S8 3000mAh Lithium Polymer Battery for iPhone 3GS/3G/iPod/BlackBerry























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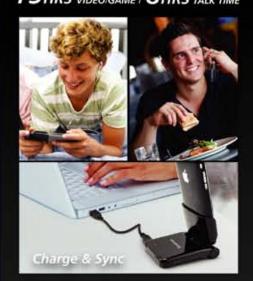


lexim DPA041





#### UP TO 60 HRS MUSIC / 15HRS VIDEO/GAME / 8HRS TALK TIME



#### Lithium Polymer BATTERY

\* Battery life will vary depending on model

#### Charge & Sync for iPhone 3GS/3G/ New iPod Touch 2G









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# **SNEAK PEEKS**

With the 2010 International Consumer Electronics Show approaching in January, many iPod and iPhone accessory developers have kept their new products a secret, hoping to make a big splash at the world's largest technology trade show. Here are some of the accessories that have trickled out in advance, including some exciting new designs.

# JBL Creature III

\$**130** 11-09

As one of iLounge's editors said when he first saw these exclusive images of the new Creature III speakers, "JBL's back!" After two years of releasing comparatively conservative -looking audio systems, the company returns to form with this even more daring update to its earlier Creature II - a system we loved due to its design, sound, and aggressive, sub-\$100 street price. The new model preserves treble and bass controls on its stylish elevated subwoofer, which now has a 75mm driver inside to fit more easily in compact quarters; its twin satellites include 40mm drivers and volume controls. Two colors will be available.







# V-Moda Crossfade Over- and On-Ear

Known for its metal earbuds and in-canal earphones, V-Moda is now bringing metal housings into two new categories: over-ear and on-ear headphones. Developed to satisfy the audio and durability needs of pro DJs, Crossfade comes in two same-priced versions, one with 40mm drivers, the other with 50mm drivers. Each includes what the company promises are a cool carrying case, swappable cables, and "amazing" sound. (Hint: V-Moda's designers like music bassy, and are comparing Crossfade to Beats by Dr. Dre.) Four color schemes will be available, all in a black base color with white, red, gray, or black accents.



# Scosche | ReviveLite 2

\$**25** 12-09/ 1-10

When Scosche released its original ReviveLite for iPods and iPhones, we were less than completely amazed: the combination of a nightlight and wall charger only half made sense - most outlets are at ankle level - and it was also bulky. The new ReviveLite answers earlier complaints: Scosche dropped the price by \$15, shrunk it by placing the dock in front rather than off to the side of the charger, and improved the light. It also includes a USB port so that you can connect another device via a self-supplied cable for charging at the same time. What about the height issue? It's pitched as a travel accessory, with folding blades and dock to reduce its size in your bag, and capable of plugging into the nightstand-level outlets found in some hotel rooms. We look forward to seeing it in person; the design is sure a lot smarter in most ways than its predecessor.



# Incipio duroSHOT V for iPod nano

\$**2** 

The idea: fifth-generation iPod nanos now have cameras, but holding one without having your fingers in the way of the lens is tricky. So Incipio has created duroSHOT|V, a new plastic nano case with a rear handle that folds out, letting you hold something other than the nano's body while shooting films; it can also be mounted on any traditional camera tripod thanks to a screw mount hole included in the handle. Four colors will be available, including "film noir black," pink, red, and clear; each will also include a screen protector, as well as a replacement back plate that omits the handle for easier nano pocketing.





\$**15** 11-08

# Griffin Travel Stand for iPhone + iPod

Sexy? Amazing engineering? Perhaps not, but Griffin Technology's new Travel Stand for iPhone + iPod does have a couple of tricks up its sleeve, namely an included cord manager for either earphones or your own charging/synchronization cable, plus a pod-shaped bottom that flips open to become a horizontal video stand capable of holding any iPhone, iPod touch, or fourth-/ fifth-generation iPod nano, and folds closed for easier carrying in your bag, briefcase, or even a pocket. Griffin suggests that it's ideally suited for the tray tables found behind seats in airplanes, and notes that it's going to be exclusive to Walmart stores when it debuts in November. We're hoping that the viewing angle is adjustable.



\$**80** 

# IvySkin SmartCase for iPhone 3G/3GS

Based substantially on the company's earlier Quattro-T4 - a hard plastic case with a touchthrough glass face and a protector for the Home button - IvySkin's SmartCase adds a 1500mAh battery to the rear of any iPhone 3G or 3GS, doubling its unassisted run time, with five power indicator lights, an included USB charging cable, a USB port designed to let both the iPhone and SmartCase charge at the same time, and a SmartSync button to switch the port into an iPhone sync mode. IvySkin is also working on the separate Quattro-T4-based KeyPal, designed to add a Blackberry-style keyboard to the 3G/3GS.



iPod touch & iPod nano

# gear up....

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Increased Dynamic Range™ earphones with tapLINE™ remote & mic for iPod & iPhone



iPhone 3GS 16GB 32GB



**iPod nano** 5th generation (video camera) 8GB 16GB





iPod touch 2nd generation 8GB 16GB 32GB 64GB



iPod classic 120GB 160GB (2009)



**iPod nano** 4th generation (video) 8GB 16GB



Volume Up

Voice Control

Play/Pause: Single Click
Next Track: Double Click

Previous Track: Triple Click

Volume Down

Integrated mic for Voice Memos, Voice Control and handsfree conversations

VoiceOver support for iPod shuffle (Gen 3)

tapLINE™ control

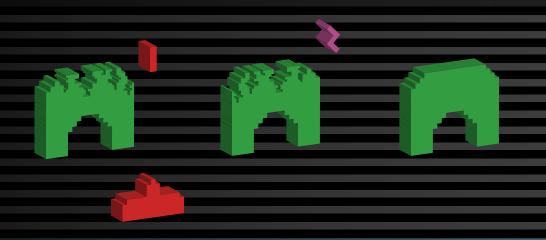
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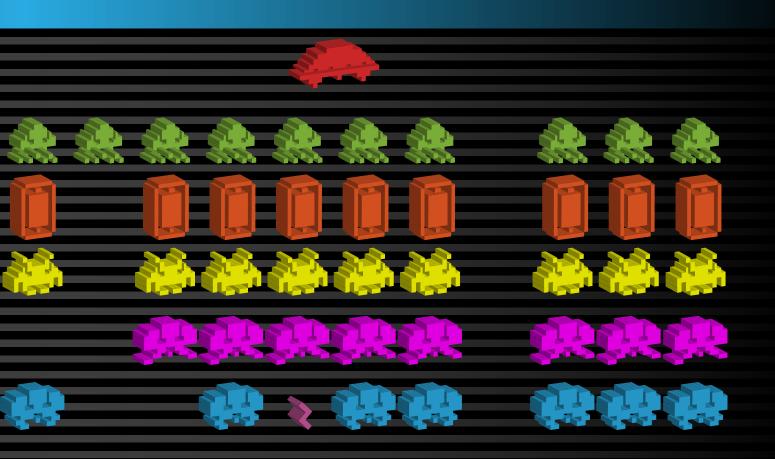






# THE TOP 100 IPHONE OF 2009





Back when such a feat was possible, we tested literally every game released for the Click Wheel iPod. These days, we've played as many App Store games for the iPhone and iPod touch as our schedules could possibly permit: hundreds of titles from big developers, one-man software houses, and everything in between. More importantly, we've continued to evaluate games on a uniform scale, issuing ratings based on the combined impression their graphics, sounds, gameplay, and pricing made on us at the time of release. If prices go up, our ratings go down.

What follows is a list of the 100 best games we've tested in the past year, spanning all sorts of genres, interfaces, and levels of ambition. Inside, you'll find big games, small games, thinking games and mindless games, modern games and remakes of classics. More than anything, we looked for games that were fun and worthy of their price tags, without repeating picks from our 2009 Buyers' Guide. It's hard to go wrong with anything here.



# RACING AND FLYING

In less than a year's time, iPhone OS developers learned the limits of Apple's first 3-D chips, then managed to surpass those limits with newer iPhone 3GS and iPod touch devices. Few games show off the horsepower of iPods and iPhones as well as these.



#### Firemint's Real Racing

Quite possibly the smartest and most impressive racer yet released for this platform, Real Racing uses the accelerometer for steering and gives you plausible in-car and behind-car views of track-based races. Stunningly smooth, dynamic 3-D graphics combine with realistic engine noises and music to create single-player or Wi-Fi excitement. \$7







#### Need For Speed, Phaze + Aqua Moto

Additional spins on the racing theme range from cars to futuristic hovercrafts to jet skis. One of the most technically impressive titles released in 2009 was Electronic Arts' Need For Speed Undercover, which was designed as a premium, console-caliber title with intermissions and a storyline. They're forgettable, but the 20 in-game licensed vehicles - Porsche, Ford, and Nissan amongst them - aren't, nor are the gritty urban backdrops and car-ramming, Burnout-inspired gameplay. Originally sold for \$10, it's a better value now. \$5

The iPhone hasn't gotten its own Wipeout-caliber futuristic racer yet, but there are a number of good-enough clones out there, and Handmark's Phaze is the best of them. It's a cinch to blow through the 16 tracks here on the easy difficulty level, using speed and weapon power-ups to your advantage on the cosmic-themed, twisting tracks, but three other difficulty levels and a smooth graphics engine make it worth seeing. \$5

Inspired by Nintendo's Wave Race 64, Resolution Interactive's Aqua Moto Racing offers jet ski action within nice, open courses that repeat themselves visually but include changing turns, ramps, and adversaries. Good water, simple fun. \$4



#### Muddy Tracks: 2XL Games' 2XL ATV Offroad + 2XL Supercross

Developed by 2XL Games, 2XL ATV Offroad (\$8) places up to 8 ATVs on indoor and outdoor tracks - forests, wintery paths and stadiums - in fluid, fun races that vary from offering gentle turns to challenging twists and bumps. A full trick system is easy to activate with on-screen buttons. 2XL Supercross (\$8) has similarly realistic graphics and stunts, giving you control of a motocross bike up against as many opponents as your iPod touch or iPhone can render. A cool over-the-handlebars view is just one of the ways it impresses; expect engine noise, no music.

#### Flying: Serious Simulations With X-Plane, Arcade Action In Top Gun

Call them apps or games, but Laminar Research's X-Plane series of flight simulators (\$10 each) have won over iLounge's real-world pilots by including training-quality flying experiences; the most game-like is X-Plane Extreme, which gives players control of the SR-71, F-22, B-1, B-2, B-52, and X-15, thrilling military planes that vary radically in size, speed, and handling characteristics. By comparison, Paramount's Top Gun (\$2) is a simplified flying game with shooting elements, placing you in an F-14 with missiles and machine guns to use against Russian jets and ships, but

forcing you to constantly avoid "Danger Zone" boxes on the screen filled with life-sapping missiles. Developed by Freeverse, it's fun and cheap.





# GOLF, FOOTBALL + BOWLING

The App Store's come a long way in the sports department since last year: almost every major sport has a full-fledged game or a minigame that's worth seeing. We've picked the best here, but there are lots of second- and third-tier picks, and new ones, too.



#### Football: Backbreaker + Madden NFL 10

It's easier to create a spectacular-looking 3-D football game when you don't need to use polygons on two entire teams full of players; NaturalMotion's Backbreaker Football (\$1) is a pure running game where you try to

avoid increasingly difficult tackles. EA's Madden (\$10) instead offers as close to a full console-style game as anyone has come, with play-by-play and touch passing controls.





**Golf** EA's Tiger Woods (\$5, top) is a realistic sim, with 7 real life courses and commentary. GLU's Mini Golf Wacky Worlds (\$3, right) is a cartoony, surreal version, and Gameloft's Let's Golf (\$2) is in the middle.







**Bowling** The best title we've seen this year is Gameloft's Midnight Bowling (\$1, top), with 5 lanes and multiple characters; Gameresort's Downhill Bowling (\$3) is an original, comedic take.



# SOCCER, TENNIS + MORE



#### Basketball + Baseball

We're not big fans of EA's full-fledged NBA Live Basketball, but Freeverse's Flick NBA (\$5, shown) includes real players and five minigames. Derek Jeter Real Baseball (\$5) does an OK job with batting, a good job with pitching, and offers a 162-game season, but lacks for real players, stadiums, and teams.



#### Best of the Rest: Tennis, Skateboarding, Boxing, Soccer + Fishing







Though it doesn't have much competition yet from other full-fledged tennis titles, Gameloft's Real Tennis 2009 (\$5) offers singles and doubles play and a Wi-Fi mode, with realistic 3-D character models and 7 stadiums. Vans SK8 Pool Service (\$3) from Fuel Industries lets you skate and do tricks in an emptied pool that looks straight out of Southern California, with believable character models and smooth animations. The 2-D cartoony opponents in GLU's Super K.O. Boxing 2 (\$5) look almost good enough to be Nintendo Punch-Out!! boxers, and include similar mixes of special attacks and "watch carefully" weaknesses, plus largely intuitive bottom-of-screen controls. The 3-D characters and stadiums in EA's FIFA 10 (\$10) are pretty plain given the company's numerous earlier releases in this franchise, but it plays a fine game of soccer with 570 teams. Freeverse's Flick Sports Fishing (\$2) manages to make a slow boating sport fun with a variety of beautifully animated backdrops, plus different

fish, bait, and items to discover.



# **SHOOTERS: FIRST-PERSON**

As one of the two most difficult genres to reproduce on the iPod touch and iPhone, first-person shooters took off when smart on-screen alternatives were developed for the twin joypads and buttons found on dedicated game consoles. Here are the biggest hits.



#### **Modern Combat: Sandstorm**

There's no easy way to explain how impressive Gameloft's fully 3-D shooter is, save to say that it's the company's third such title (after Brothers In Arms and Terminator: Salvation) and the first to get the controls, graphics, sounds, and storyline to console-quality levels of performance. Ten missions will leave you hungering for more; sniping, vehicles, and machine guns are all here. \$7

#### More Options: Resident Evil, Doom Resurrection, MGS + iBomber

Virtual controls have enabled all sorts of 3-D shooters to appear in the App Store; Capcom's Resident Evil: Degeneration (\$3, top left) is the better of its two Evil survival horror titles, with backdrops and characters that don't blur together like its port of Resident Evil 4. iD Software's Doom Resurrection (\$7) draws from the awesome PC title Doom 3, but limits your body movement to a set course through 8 detailed 3-D backgrounds, giving you control over your



head and gun targeting. Konami's Metal Gear Solid Touch (\$6) was a disappointment when first released with only part of its content; a later update brought it up to 20 levels, including some challenging boss encounters, though its artwork is largely 2-D, created from pre-rendered Metal Gear Solid 4 stages and characters. Finally, Cobra Mobile's iBomber (\$3) takes a totally different view of its military action, giving you a plane's eye look at the Pacific Ocean in 1943 to carry out bombing missions while in flight.







# SHOOTERS: TOP + SIDE



#### Siberian Strike + Sky Force

Dozens - perhaps hundreds - of overhead shooters have been released in the App Store, but few have been console-quality. Gameloft's Siberian Strike (\$1, left) is a truly awesome value, evoking Capcom's classic 1942 series, plus 3-D planes and 12 surprisingly real backdrops. Infinite Dreams' impressively intense Sky Force Reloaded (\$2) is heavy on bonus point collection, using trinkets to lure your spaceship into bullets.



#### More Shooting: Heavy Mach, Alive 4-Ever + iYamato

Different from the typical side-scrolling shooter, IndieAn's Heavy Mach (\$1) actually combines

light platforming with shooting, enabling you to drive and jump your armored vehicle in addition to executing attacks on hundreds of types of enemies; beautiful animation is the highlight. Cool weapons, boss encounters, and 30 missions - including "rescue the survivors" stages - enable the horror-themed overhead shooter Alive 4-Ever (\$3) to rise above most of the pack, while the extremely simple iYamato (\$1) from Geppetto takes a different tack, placing you in an impossible mission to save a continually bombarded ship from sinking.







# **RETRO-STYLED SHOOTERS**

Games don't need hyper-realistic graphics in order to be worthwhile, however, some "retro" titles do better than others at using the iPhone OS's potential. These are just some of the retro shooters that have really impressed us over the past year.



#### **Ngmoco's Dropship**

Save stranded people. Shoot at enemies in the air and on the ground. Pull cargo out of tight spots in over 18 levels. That's the basic concept behind Dropship (FREE), an impressively designed game with dual joysticks that can be conjured wherever you touch on the screen. Ngmoco's use of your contacts' names for rescuees is a cute touch.

#### Old School: Meteor Blitz, Isotope, Blue Attack! + Blue Defense!



Retro isn't just a style of art - it's a reference to classic arcade games and the action-intense, quarter-popping thrills they used to inspire. Three of the titles here are throwbacks to classics such as Atari's Asteroids and Williams' Robotron; Alley Labs' Meteor Blitz (\$2, top left)

and iDrinkapp's Isotope (\$2, bottom left) both use dual joysticks to let you shoot everything in sight, with Blitz using snazzy 3-D planet artwork and elemental weaponry against numerous types of enemies, and Isotope including line-based vector art mazes and cool particle effects alongside a complex, RPG-like weapon



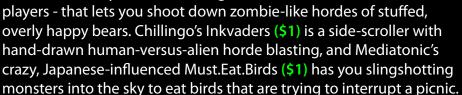
upgrade system and boss encounters. John Kooistra's Blue Attack! (\$2) and Blue Defense! (\$2) use similarly retro vector art to represent massive numbers of red enemies and your blue weaponry; Attack! lets you fly around, and Defense! has you defend planets from invaders.



# **MORE SHOOTERS**

# Wild West Guns, Battle Bears, Inkvaders & Must.Eat.Birds

Shooting mini-games have reached new heights on Apple's devices, as developers have been able to offer bite-sized games at appropriately low price points. Gameloft's Wild West Guns (\$1) is a collection of 18 fun touch-based shooting galleries, loosely tied together by a western theme. SkyVu's Battle Bears (\$1) is a deliberately demented, funny title - for teenaged and older











#### **Different Types of Spacey Shooters: StarPagga + Iron Sight**

Though starship-themed first-person shooters have been around for decades, creating really compelling ones isn't easy. Funsuma's StarPagga (\$2) is the best we've seen on the iPhone, offering 12 missions set in nicely rendered space environments with multiple ships and weapons to choose from. PolarBit's Iron Sight (\$4) is a futuristic strategic shooting game challenging you to position mecha robots to take safe shots at distant, armed targets elsewhere on 3-D maps.





# RETRO ARCADE-INSPIRED

Whether they're sequels to past arcade games or just heavily inspired by them, these titles have caught our attention by recalling some of the great gameplay experiences of years past, updated with iPhone OS graphics and sounds in wildly different styles.



#### Space Invaders Infinity Gene

Taito's vector-heavy title has a lot more in common with 1990s overhead shooter gameplay than the 1978 arcade hit, but its multiple weapons and ability to evolve new stages from your music are truly cool features; its own soundtrack is quite good, as well. \$5

#### Radial50 + 3D Brick Breaker

**Revolution** Atari's Breakout has inspired lots of App Store games;



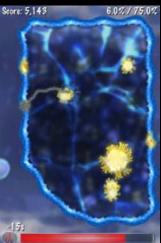
RoundThird's
Radial 50 (\$2)
is a colorful,
pixel-precise 2-D
take, and Digital
Chocolate's 3D
Brick Breaker
Revolution
(\$3) presents
everything as cool
3-D polygons.



#### Diversity in Vertical Games: Eliss, Dr. Awesome, Centipede + Edge

Though its vector-style graphics look plain in screenshots, Eliss (\$3) by Steph Thirion uses modern touch-sensitive controls to let you drag and pull apart colored dots as they appear on screen, a concept that begs for a larger display. Ngmoco's Dr. Awesome (\$1) is an ode to Taito's classic Qix, requiring you to draw your way around contaminated cells, cutting off the bad parts and saving the rest. Atari's modern remake of Centipede (\$2) includes a mode with bright, updated graphics and Millipede-style challenges, plus better weapons, while Mobigame's Edge (\$5) is a brilliant maze game where you move a block between sometimes precarious platforms.









# MODERN CONSOLE-INSPIRED



#### PSP Who? Assassin's Creed, Gangstar, Hero of Sparta + Blades of Fury

Gameloft isn't afraid to borrow from console greats to build a strong App Store catalog. Assassin's Creed: Altair's Chronicles (\$5) is a Prince of Persia-styled run and jump platformer; Gangstar (\$7) is a clone of Grand Theft Auto 3, Hero of Sparta (\$2) duplicates Sony's God of War, and Blades of Fury (\$7) is a good enough Soul Calibur wannabe. All four games use virtual joypads and buttons to great effect, and boast Sony PSP-quality aesthetics, though their gameplay is generally less impressive than the originals.

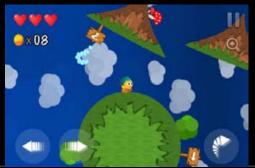


#### Rolando, Rolando 2: Quest For The Golden Orchid, Soosiz + GloBall

Ngmoco's Rolando (\$3, inset) and Rolando 2 (\$6) surely took visual inspiration from Sony's LocoRoco, but the gameplay - control multiple ball-shaped characters as they navigate through platform-filled mazes - is original, and better in the sequel. Touch Foo's Soosiz (\$3) is basically

Super Mario Galaxy Lite - an awesome, 65-level 2-D platformer. Robot Super Brain's GloBall (\$3) is an iPhone-twisting, block-breaking maze game with cool special effects, and lots of levels.





## **CARNIVAL + TABLE GAMES**

From Skee-Ball to pinball and casino gambling, the iPod touch and iPhone have become superb platforms for recreations of low-impact table games, game shows, and board games. We've picked the best ones, but there are many, many more in the App Store.



#### Ramp Champ: Starts Out Good, Becomes Great

When Apple added "in-app purchasing" to the iPhone OS, we feared that developers would nickle and dime their games to death. The



Iconfactory's Ramp Champ shows the feature's value: it ships with 4 good levels for \$2 and then lets you add additional twin-level packs for a fair \$1 each. Each level is a beautifully drawn Skee-Ball-style "ramp," packed with moving targets, hidden surprises, and gentle music.



#### **Burning Monkey Casino + Pinball**

Simple, relatively bland card and casino games appeared quickly after the App Store opened, and then came Freeverse's Burning Monkey Casino (\$3), a highly stylized seven-game casino title with 1950's-inspired art and lounge-themed joke intermissions. Blackjack, pachinko, video poker, and slots are the main draws, with a money wheel, scratch-off lotto, and 3-Card Monty as additional





options - a great value for the price. Separately, Matmi's Monster Pinball (\$4) offers a very unique, multi-table approach to pinball - six machines, connected together via ramps - with detailed art, retro-alien sound effects, and fun targets. By contrast, Gameprom's The Deep Pinball (\$1) is the best-looking 3-D pinball game in the Store, offering only a single nautical-themed machine but using beautifully rendered objects inside, along with ocean-faring music, lots of voice samples, and realistic physics.

#### Board Games: Electronic Arts' Clue and Gameloft's Uno

Lots of classic board games have found their way into the App Store, but only a few have really stood out. Electronic Arts' Clue (\$3) is a very stylish, beautifully illustrated restructuring of the murder mystery game, placing you in the role of a journalist exploring a series of increasingly complex killings in a mansion. Each killing involves more variables than the last, and is randomized for replay value. Gameloft's Uno (\$5) makes the classic multi-player numbered card-matching game even more fun - and less messy - than playing with a traditional deck. As with many of Gameloft's titles, online and multiplayer modes let you compete against other people.



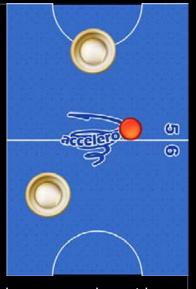






# 10 Balls 7 Cups, The Price Is Right + Air Hockey

As much as we enjoy Ramp Champ, there's no doubt that Graveck's 10 Balls



7 Cups (\$1) is a more faithful rendition of the original arcade and carnival game, complete with a netted 3-D lane, textured balls, and the classic array of circular targets. Ludia's sophisticated rendition of the TV show The Price is Right (\$5) is one of the most impressive game show conversions we've seen on the iPod touch and iPhone, including high-resolution renditions of 16 different pricing games from the TV show; unfortunately, the app became unstable under recent versions of the iPhone OS. Many air hockey titles, similarly named, have appeared in the App Store; Acceleroto's Air Hockey (\$1) isn't the flashiest-looking, but it is the best we've seen in gameplay, with smooth, realistic movement of the puck and mallets.

# **PUZZLE + STRATEGY GAMES**

Racers, shooters, and action games can grab you, but a good puzzle game can hold on to your attention for much longer if it's designed properly. Here are the best of the puzzle titles we've tried over the past year, spanning a number of different sub-genres.



#### **Nearly Legendary: Azkend + Dragon Portals**

We don't use the words "beautiful" or "console-quality" lightly, but these two puzzlers from MythPeople have the sort of polish that

rivals would die for: Azkend (\$5) is a hexagonal gridbased matching game with beautiful special effects, and Dragon Portals (\$5) uses lines of colored discs that can be slid individually upwards or downwards to make matches.





#### **Smart Puzzlers: Drop7, Triazzle + Tatomic**

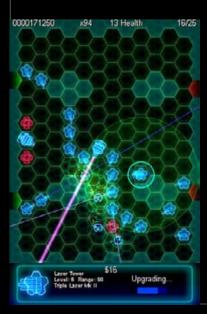
As much as we love and appreciate games with great audio and visual content, sometimes a puzzler comes along with a clean, smart design and wows us anyway. Area/Code's Drop7 (\$3) is an example, a 7-by-7 grid where numbers are dropped down one by one, disappearing only when their position in a given line matches the number - 1 on any line by itself, 7 in a line with six other numbers. It can be played for hour-stretches. Dreamship's Triazzle (\$3) is all about rotating triangles to make the animals and insects on their edges match up with pre-defined halves on the sides of a 9- or 16-triangle board; its aesthetics are beautifully polished. The comparatively less flashy Tatomic (FREE) from VGViews delivers a gameplay experience similar to the popular PSP and Xbox game Lumines, but with its own visual style and added depth.





#### Tower Defense: geoDefense Swarm, Star Defense + Fieldrunners

Worthy of attention but not all the hype it received, the tower defense genre - here's a map, put some weapon-laden towers on it and keep hordes of



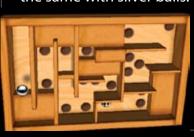
enemies from escaping through an exit - has been well-represented in the App Store; Critical Thought's retro-styled geoDefense Swarm (\$2) uses great vector effects and smart maps, while Ngmoco's Star Defense (\$1) has globe-shaped maps and 3-D objects, and Fieldrunners (\$3) uses cartoony 2-D military-themed objects and enemies in many stages.





# Zen Bound, Ivory Tiles + Wooden Labyrinth 3-D

They're all about moving the iPod/iPhone the right way. Chillingo's Zen Bound (\$5) covers wooden objects in rope to reach completion thresholds; Munkyfun's Ivory Tiles (\$1) has you tilt tiles to move them through mazes, and Elias Pietila's Wooden Labyrinth 3-D (\$3) does the same with silver balls.







# Path Puzzles: Flight Control + The Battle of Pirate Bay

No one would have imagined that Firemint's Flight Control (\$1) - a game that has you draw flight paths for planes and helicopters, set to a retro 1930's theme - would be a

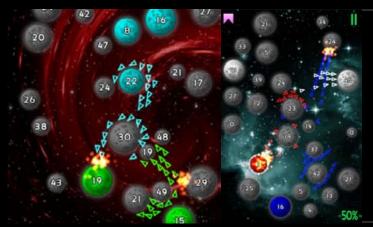




huge casual
hit, but it was,
and clones
followed.
Muteki's
Battle of
Pirate Bay (\$1)
offers a more
colorful take
with ships,
cannons, and
Zelda: Wind
Waker-styled
cartoony art.

## WORD + MAP GAMES

Too few titles challenge your brain as much as your fingers; these word and map games demand smarter responses than the typical twitch shooter or racer, and reward you with greater intellectual and strategic challenges as you learn the ropes.



#### **Galcon Labs: Risk-y Business**

Phil Hassey's Galcon Labs (\$1) evolves the Risk-like game of planet-conquering. As before, you touch planets to dispatch ships, conquering more planets and eradicating hostile ones; optional modes let ships disappear and fight each other, and Billiards enables the planets to move. A cool update.

#### WordFu, Quordy, MyWordCoach + Wordjong

Something about word games - perhaps the ease with which they can be churned out - has inspired hundreds of different options to date, and we've played lots of them. Complete with a martial arts theme, Ngmoco's WordFu (\$1) is the funniest, giving you a set of nine dice that are quickly shaken to reveal all the letters you can use to make as many words as possible in under a minute. Occasional time-slowing and other rewards appear. Cleanly designed, Lonely Star's Quordy (\$3) gives you a four-by-four grid and three types of dictionaries, and you swipe from letter to letter making as many words as possible within your preferred time limit; Gameloft's MyWordCoach (\$5) has six word games designed to help kids build vocabularies, and Gameblend's Wordjong (\$3) has you eliminate letters from Shanghai Mahjongg-styled tile stacks to build words.





# **GAMES FOR KIDS**

#### **Light Action: Cops & Robbers, Spider + Sway**

Though many of the games we've looked at here are kid-friendly, some are more clearly designed for younger audiences than others. GLU's Cops & Robbers (\$3) is a modestly edgy, fixed-perspective 3-D game where crooks go after diamonds and cops go after crooks; you first control the crook, then the cop in pursuit. Tiger Style's Spider: The Secret of Bryce Manor (\$3) is a lighter, 2-D title where you control a spider that needs to jump, spin webs, and snare insects as it makes its way through 28 rooms of a mansion. Illusion Labs' Sway (\$5) has you use your fingers to make a sock puppet's arms grip walls, swinging her to and fro as she collects items and jumps around.











#### A Little Learning: The Oregon Trail + Volcano Planet

So dusty from 1980's computers that it was hard to imagine as a viable iPhone and iPod touch title, The Oregon Trail (\$5) has been remade very effectively by Gameloft, simultaneously teaching the story of a family's 19th Century struggle to reach the Western United States, and offering a lot of fun along the way. Managing the health and hunger of the family through wilderness scenes is part of the challenge; succeeding at mini-games and making smart choices in dealing with strangers is another. Jelly Biscuits' cool Volcano Planet (\$1) isn't quite as mentally taxing, but challenges you to spin a planet in 3-D, extinguishing volcanoes on its surface while releasing built-up gases in its atmosphere; every tap adds to a song that plays at the game's end.

# LIGHT ACTION PUZZLERS

Relying on set level-based challenges with solutions that are open to the player's smart positioning and timing, these action puzzlers are fun for players of any age, but especially appealing to challenge-seekers with good hand-eye coordination.



#### Ballsy Games: Orbitsu, Peggle + Luxor

The humble ball is one of the most popular items found in iPhone games: in many cases, you control one ball that's being pointed at other ones. Flying Dino's Orbitsu (\$1) has 200 levels where balls orbit around stars at center screen, and you need to match three or more balls of the same color by touching the screen at the right time and place. In Peggle (\$5), the iPhone version of the best game yet released for Click Wheel iPods, you fire a silver ball into colored pegs through dozens of levels, eliminating at least all the red ones to move on. Music has been promised for months, but isn't here yet. MumboJumbo's \$3 Luxor has you move a ball-firing cannon at the bottom of the screen to make color matches, as a line of balls draws closer to an exit point; if one hits the exit, they'll end the game.

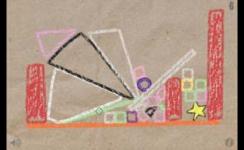




#### **Physics Puzzlers: Touch Physics + Ragdoll Blaster**

Two of the best budget games for iPhones and iPod touches challenge you to understand the impact of gravity and momentum on moving objects from one side of the screen to the other. Gamez 4 Touch's Touch Physics (\$2) offers 50 cool levels where you draw lines, circles, boxes, and

triangles to to move a ball to touch a star; Ragdoll Blaster (\$1) has you fire ragdolls from a cannon towards 100 levels of targets that have been obscured by obstacles.





# RHYTHM + MUSIC GAMES

The iPod changed the way people carried music; now the iPhone is redefining the way they play music games. Licensed one-album games, games where new songs are downloaded over 3G, and titles where you play with friends online - all for \$5 or less.



#### Tap Tap Revenge 2 + Tap Tap Coldplay

Tapulous' Tap Tap Revenge series is as well-known as iPhone games get: its free Tap Tap Revenge 2 (left) lets one or two people tap on one of three lines to the beats of downloadable songs, while the considerably better Tap Tap Coldplay (\$5) added trippy graphics and 13 great tracks from the popular British band. A new Tap Tap Revenge 3 (not shown) sells themed track packs; free ones are only OK.



#### Leaf Trombone, Saturday Night Fever: Dance + Guitar Rock Tour 2

Other App Store music games range from creative to derivative. Smule's Leaf Trombone: World Stage (\$1) is brilliant, letting you play a simple musical instrument to notes shown on screen, then watch as your performance is judged by other players from around the planet; you can judge too. Paramount's Saturday Night Fever: Dance (\$1) lets you tap numbers in rhythm to four classic disco songs, watching a 3-D dancer groove, a concept perfected in Nintendo DS games. Gameloft's Guitar Rock Tour 2 (\$5) apes console Guitar Hero and Rock Band games, having you tap four strings to 18 covered classic rock tracks, or switch off and play the two-tap drums.

