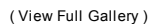



10★TopTenREVIEWS

Software » Education » Educational Games Grades K-3 Review » JumpStart

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JumpStart	Elementary Advantage	Schootown	Disney Learning 1st	Crazy Machines 2	Reader Rabbit Reading
					

8.8

8.8

9.4

7.5

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5

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JumpStart offers a wide range of features unmatched by many competitors in the educational games industry. They have been gaining significant ground in the products they make of late and further differentiate themselves with the wide range of exploration-based learning activities. These provided us with a very unique and engaging approach to education that has proven quite popular among younger students.

No other competitor that we found was able to offer many of JumpStart's features, which further strengthens the software's placement at the head of our review list on educational games. The focus of the software was not on providing a linear curriculum of learning. They do an excellent job of realizing that each student is at a different point in their educational understanding, and this software did an excellent job of providing features that were highly adaptable. We noticed the presence of the following features as we tested several of their products:

- Learning Profiler determines child's learning style and adjusts play
- Automatic leveling adjusts to child's pace
- Motivating reward system keeps children engaged
- Based on State Educational Standards

We were amazed that this software could recognize when it is posing questions too difficult for the student, a feature that we noticed through one of our reviewers who was not all that good at math. Too many other products offer a single curriculum lesson and do not deviate except in the case of activities. JumpStart, on the other hand, adjusts the difficulty of the lessons to suit the student's understanding. This special feature ensures that your students will not feel bored or overwhelmed, but instead will feel accomplished when they complete challenging – yet doable – activities.

We noticed the software covered a lot of reading, one of the most in-depth courses among educational games. As learning to read is a very basic and foundational skill for increased learning and comprehension, it is rather appropriate that they focus so much on the subject. Throughout our tests, we encountered lessons and activities intended to build skills in phonics, listening, comprehension, consonant and vowel sounds, word building, vocabulary, spelling and sequencing stories.

JumpStart's math activities are relevant and challenging to the student's grade level. The introduction of math-based activities is not as abrupt or random as in Schooltown but is cleverly integrated into the activities we played. As we completed levels in an activity, it grew progressively more difficult and included such skills as counting, addition, subtraction and equations. For example, in the third grade edition of the game, we were presented with the issue of turning up a science facility's power generator. In order to do so, we had to power up each section of the generator by combining numbers through addition to equal a specific number. When we completed that challenge we were presented with the same situation for a new set of generators, but this time it required multiplication.

We noticed that, for educational games, this software did not put as much emphasis on science. The science activities were more basic than anything else and only discussed the different stages of life as well as some comparison and contrast lessons. The activities did, however, help build upon our problem solving skills.

The world always needs more culturally aware individuals, and these programs will help arm your students with a better understanding of not only their own country, but others throughout the world. JumpStart offers a number of activities geared toward helping kids better understand communities, world regions, history, geography, countries, world landmarks, cultures and foreign phrases. We found the activities were very basic and easy to pick up as they focused on subjects such as country names and location on a map.

This educational game offers a foundation for art education in such subjects as colors, shapes and creativity. The approach we found to be quite different and slightly distracting. We played a game where we were taught about famous paintings. While it was hard to retain so many details from the dozens of paintings we could search through, we appreciated the attempt to help us become more artistically intelligent. In one such learning challenge, we were tasked with finding a piece of art by a specific artist. At first, this was quite fun and we got to listen to audio bites that explained the origins and painter for each piece of art. Yet when we realized that there were a good 20-30 paintings to search through, it got rather boring and tedious.

In tandem with art education is musical education. We may not have enjoyed those piano lessons we were forced into as children, but such activities as were included on JumpStart are intended to help develop language and reasoning skills as well as spatial intelligence (perceiving the world accurately and forming mental pictures of things). The software offered us the many opportunities to instill such improvements through activities geared around instrument sounds, musical patterns and musical styles. For example, in the Kindergarten edition of JumpStart, we were allowed the opportunity to orchestrate a symphony by selecting instruments and assigning them specific times to begin playing. We were able to select from percussion, string and brass instruments and even scroll through different instrument types to hear how they would sound in comparison to other instruments.

Educational Value: 9.4/10

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The educational game offers a wide range of learning activities backed by a self-adjusting Learning Profiler, which matched the difficulty of learning activities depending on our performance. This alone puts JumpStart far ahead of other competitors. Purchasing educational games that will match a child's individual learning

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style and pace further empowers your students to more easily improve in areas where they struggle. Every game offered through JumpStart has a specific educational goal or subject intended to simultaneously teach and entertain your students. All of the core subjects taught in elementary are offered and will provide a strong foundation for your students' learning.

Ease of Use: 8.1/10

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While we felt some of the products offered by JumpStart were rather old in look and feel, they still proved easy to navigate. The games were very interactive and prompted us when we could participate or influence the scenario. We found the interface to be very simple and intuitive, and the games even went so far as to explain the interface throughout the game.

Kid Appeal: 9.4/10

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Your students will immediately lose themselves in a fun and enjoyable setting that will test and challenge their minds. The program looks and plays like a video game, but it integrates learning elements seamlessly (almost covertly) throughout. These educational games encourage students to participate in learning activities and cultivate discovery-based learning in many entertaining and exciting activities. We felt that the storylines were unique from other games simply for the fact that there was some obvious quality in graphics and the storylines were engaging.

Help & Support: 10/10

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JumpStart offers a wide range of support tools through which you can address any installation or game issues that may occur. For troubleshooting, you can easily phone or email their support team as well as view their online FAQs. You can even sign up on their website for an email newsletter that includes parenting tips.

Summary:

This educational gaming series earned our first place ranking because of its comprehensive features, its educational value, and how appealing it is to kids. **JumpStart** has proven to us that it is dedicated to creating entertaining education (or "edutainment" as some call it). Based on their success thus far they will most assuredly continue to offer educational games that will help your students build a better foundation for their educational growth. These products will prove to be uplifting, educational and much more constructive than regular entertainment games.

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