iOS apps for Early Exploration of Typing & Specialized Keyboards

Here is a list of over 50 iOS apps for early exploration of typing and specialized keyboards. For kids who are just beginning to show an interest and are easily frustrated it's important to keep it as motivating and as fun as possible. An iPad full of well designed apps can be an amazing tool in your educational & therapeutic toolbox.

In this post I am sharing a mix of paid and free apps that I have used and found helpful.

- Free: 22 apps
- Affordable ($.99 - $4.99 - what you might pay for an item from the Target Dollar Spot, a latte from Starbucks, an item on Teachers Pay Teachers or a Boom Card deck): 20 apps
- Mid-priced ($5.99 -$15.99 - what you might pay for a new toy, game or picture book): 7 apps
- Expensive ($16.99 - $24.99 - what you might pay for therapy materials or bundles of items on TPT, both are specifically designed for individuals with special needs): 2 apps
- Very expensive (over $24.99 - is specifically designed for individuals with special needs and has lots of customization features): 1 app

Of course every app that I share will not be a good fit for every child so it's up to you to determine the ones to use with your child or patient.

I had several patients over my career whose interest in typing and AAC was initially sparked by their high interest in letters and the predictable order of the alphabet (similar to kids with a high interest in numbers, dates, etc...). Typing can also become an important part of writing and access to the curriculum.

You can save the PDF of this post in the iBooks app on your iPad and then tap on each link to go to that app in the App Store (it's a 5 -page PDF). I only have access to the USA App Store so be sure to check prices before downloading in other countries.

App prices & availability was verified in the USA App Store at the time of this post at 3:00pm CST on 5/17/20. Prices may vary in other countries based on the exchange rate.

General App Tips:

- Some apps have IAPs (in-app purchases) to add extra features or have unsecured links so make sure the iPad is in "airplane mode" and toggle off the ability to download IAPs in the Settings area BEFORE opening the app. Even apps with "secured links" could be hacked by some kids so it's always wise to go ahead do these two things before using apps with kids. I avoid apps with ads (some can be blocked via "airplane mode" but others cannot). It's also wise to use Guided Access to prevent exiting the app you are using.

- If you like a "lite" version of an app, it is always a good idea to see if there is a full paid version of the app to purchase vs. using an IAP to upgrade within a free lite app. I've had enough problems with IAPs and trying to restore IAPs to avoid them as much as possible. Also most schools & public agencies have purchasing regulations that make it difficult or impossible to purchase items via IAP but can purchase a full paid app. This is the same reason that I typically avoid apps that require a subscription.

- If you are looking for Android apps, the quickest way to see if an app has an Android version is to copy the name of an app and then paste into the search area on the Google Play app store or Amazon app store. If the app is available it may not be free on those platforms and/or may contain ads so look closely at each app description. Also look at reviews to see how well apps function since Android versions of apps may not be updated as frequently as iOS apps.

Apps that use their own in-app keyboard (instead of the iOS iPad keyboard):

1. Tapkins by Island Pte Ltd, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/tapkins/id1317210444, FREE (The errorless learning style in this app would be a really good match for most kids with Autism.)
2. Baby Keyboard by Ruiyi Chen, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/baby-keyboard/id1448361670, FREE (Ignore the word "baby" in the app name. It's a fun free app, has color cue for the correct key and several categories of typing cards to choose from in the settings.)
3. Interactive Alphabet ABC's by Piikea St. LLC, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/interactive-alphabet-abcs/id383967580, $2.99 (The typing activity within this app is fun and there is a subtle cue for the correct letter keys.)
4. The Writing Machine by Hump Software, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/the-writing-machine/id438108325, $.99 (Explore and tap to match initial letter in a word. Has options for switches and scanning is needed.)
5. i Can Type - Sight Words by Michael Harvey, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/i-can-type-sight-words/id1292509602 $.99 (Nice cueing for correct keys and easy sight words presented in context of color photo and word narrated in a simple sentence.)
6. Clever Keyboard: ABC Learning Game For Kids by Absolutist Ltd, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/clever-keyboard-abc-learning-game-for-kids/id576724288, $.99
7. Verbal Me Sampler by fishdog, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/verbal-me-sampler/id504978876, FREE (has a typing page with voice output)

Apps that use the iOS iPad keyboard (this means you can combine it with one of the keyboard extension apps):

1. Type Letters by Tin Whistle, LLC, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/type-letters/id1498328032, iOS 13.2 or later, FREE (no frills, just types big letters on white background, nice to use for a no distraction exploring typing background)
2. Audivision by ATeamer, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/audivision/id1141299943, iOS 8.0 or later, FREE (no frills, just types big letters on white background, can slide to adjust font size in the iPad Settings area for this app, nice to use for a no distraction exploring typing background)
3. Statement - visual communication and large text by Todd Anderson, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/statement-visual-communication-and-large-text/id1018664801, FREE (no frills, just types big letters on dark background, nice to use for a no distraction exploring typing background)
4. Keyboard Explore by Susan Hossack, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/keyboard-explore/id608928363, FREE (may not work for iOS 11 or beyond, has option for external Bluetooth keyboard)
5. Type and Learn HD-S by Jetmobile, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/type-and-learn-hd-s/id846561699, $.99 (uses iOS iPad keyboard but keyboard extension apps only work in the open ended typing area, has open ended typing with text to speech, option to toggle on red outline around keys as hint in the spelling activity)
6. Dic-Dic. Multilingual dictation to practice spelling, writing and sound-letter matching by Perception Technologies, S.L., https://apps.apple.com/us/app/dic-dic-multilingual-dictation-to-practise-spelling/id643656920, FREE
7. Animal Typing - Lite by Corentin Faucher, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/animal-typing-lite/id925341131, FREE lite app. (Has options for external Bluetooth keyboards. I don't have the full paid version so don't know if it's worth $14.99 or not.)
8. SnapType by SnapType, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/snaptype/id1124115982, FREE with IAP to upgrade to the Pro version (a "must have" app that allows you to import any worksheet to type onto it; if you want more features look at the full paid version of the app: SnapType Pro by SnapType, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/snaptype-pro/id1124123246, $4.99.)
9. Adobe Scan Digital PDF Scanner by Adobe Inc., https://apps.apple.com/us/app/adobe-scan-digital-pdf-scanner/id1199564834, FREE with IAPs
10. Adobe Acrobat Reader for PDF by Adobe Inc., https://apps.apple.com/us/app/adobe-acrobat-reader-for-pdf/id469337564, FREE with IAPs (these two Adobe apps can be used together to scan a worksheet to turn it into a PDF and then annotate it with typing text. I find SnapType a much easier to use but sharing this as another option.)

11. ClaroPDF – Image to PDF Reader by Claro Software Limited, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/claropdf-image-to-pdf-reader/id666770153, FREE with IAPs (can also be used to import a picture of a worksheet and then annotate it with typing text. I find SnapType a much easier to use but sharing this as another option.)

Keyboard Extension Apps: It may be helpful to consider using a keyboard extension app that would make the iOS iPad Keyboard easier to use with features that are kid and special needs friendly.

1. Keedogo by AssistiveWare, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/keedogo/id915829477, $.99 (My favorite keyboard extension app with lots of customization options. Good for beginning typists since it doesn't have word prediction or auto correction. If you want additional features the look at
2. Keedogo Plus by AssistiveWare, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/keedogo-plus/id918496636, $2.99 (has more features)
3. Keeble by AssistiveWare, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/keeble/id918497054, $24.99 quite a bit more expensive due to all of the customization and accessibility features)

4. Big Keys Low Vision Keyboard by N Thorn, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/big-keys-low-vision-keyboard/id1139220959, $2.99 (specifically designed for unique needs)
5. My First Keyboard by aacorn, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/my-first-keyboard/id924324310, $1.99 (I like the blocks keyboard with dark background, word prediction can be toggled on/off)
6. Big Keys Keyboard by Hassan Hattab, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/big-keys-keyboard/id1187555128, $3.99 (several color and font size customization options)
7. SuperKeys Accessible Keyboard by Crick Software, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/superkeys-accessible-keyboard/id917216287, $12.99 (A very unique keyboard that enlarges quadrants and then you select a large key within it. Nice for those with vision or fine motor needs but can also be helpful for those overwhelmed by looking through the entire field of keys. The SuperKeys keyboard is built in as an option in all of the Clicker Communicator AAC apps.
8. Phonics Keyboard by Therapy Box Limited, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/phonics-keyboard/id1031514501, $2.99 (There are also some fun activities within the app)

Other unique keyboard extension apps (not necessarily for kids or beginning typists.... but sharing just so folks will be inspired to think outside the box and search the App Store. Apps are often updated with new features and new apps are released frequently:

1. AlphaBoard – Simple Keyboard by QZero Labs, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/alphaboard-simple-keyboard/id1199298996, FREE (super simple scrollable alphabetic keyboard, keys are very small)
2. HERO One-handed Keyboard by Corey Stone LLC, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/hero-one-handed-keyboard/id921879642, FREE with IAPs
3. Fleksy- GIF, Web & Yelp Search by Fleksy, Inc., https://apps.apple.com/us/app/fleksy-gif-web-yelp-search/id520337246, FREE with IAPs
4. Pro Keyboard with PC Layout by Raul Monterroso Cabello, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/pro-keyboard-with-pc-layout/id1106280090, $5.99 (for more advanced typists who want a full PC style keyboard with the ability to customize the color for sensory needs)
5. SwiftKey Keyboard by SwiftKey, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/swiftkey-keyboard/id911813648, FREE (for more advanced typists who want a full PC style keyboard with the ability to customize the color for sensory needs, customization options, ability to swipe to type, has a nice "real keyboard" feel, the description shows IAPs for additional keyboard styles but as far as I can tell everything is included now. I'm currently using the "Nickel Classic Dark" theme as a nice alternative to the iOS iPad keyboard.)

6. WordBoard - Phrase Keyboard by Bytesize, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/wordboard-phrase-keyboard/id960167417, FREE with IAPs (would use as a secondary keyboard, allows you to make and use customized phrase buttons)

FYI... There are a few AAC apps that use the iOS iPad Keyboard and therefore would allow for a keyboard extension app to be used. Examples include: Speak for Yourself, Proloquo2Go, Mighty AAC, ChatAble, Proloquo4Text, Predictable, Voice4u TTS, QuickType, Flip Writer, HandySpeech and several other text-to-speech (TTS) AAC apps. Exploring alternative keyboards can be a game changer for making typing as a means of AAC accessible. You may also want to explore accessibility features in the iPad settings (https://support.apple.com/guide/ipad/get-started-with-accessibility-features-ipad9a2465f9/ipados), styluses, adapted styluses, keyguards, external Bluetooth keyboards, etc. Take a look at Lauren S. Enders' well organized Pinterest boards for ideas: https://pin.it/TWn9w6P (styluses: https://pin.it/t4cy8XV, keyboards & keyboard cases: https://pin.it/NydPTE8). **I highly encourage you to collaborate with an Occupational Therapist and/or Assistive Technology Specialist when exploring AT options for the iPad.** Some of that equipment is pricey so you want to make good decisions that fit that individual child's needs. You may want to try things out in order to make those decisions. **How to find the AT Lending Library in your state:** https://www.at3center.net/stateprogram. Many have iPads, specialized apps and AT equipment available for short term loan to try out before making purchasing recommendations.

Other specialized apps to consider:

1. Ghost Type - a typing tutor to master your iPad typing skills by demografix pty ltd, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/ghost-type-a-typing-tutor-to-master-your-ipad-typing-skills/id495081717, $4.99
2. inku - tool for dyslexia by Therapy Box Limited, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/inku-tool-for-dyslexia/id1042258087, $14.99
3. Abilipad by Cheryl Bregman, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/abilipad/id435865000, $9.99
4. Clicker Sentences by Crick Software, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/clicker-sentences/id575603433, $64.99 (I love the Clicker apps but the description in the App Store mentions they are being replaced by the Clicker Writer system. See their website for information: https://www.cricksoft.com/us/clicker/apps)
5. Pictello by AssistiveWare, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/pictello/id397858008, $18.99 (uses the iOS iPad keyboard, many kids are motivated to type as they create their own books)
6. Easy Dyslexia Aid: Dyslexic & Dysgraphia Support by Nuapp Productions Pty Ltd, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/easy-dyslexia-aid-dyslexic-dysgraphia-support/id1088194043, $2.99
7. Word Wizard for Kids School Ed by L'Escapadou, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/word-wizard-for-kids-school-ed/id447312716, $7.99 (Not a "typing" app but a really fun way to introduce kids to letter exploration and putting together letters to make words.). Their letter tracing app is also great: Writing Wizard for Kids by L'Escapadou, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/writing-wizard-for-kids/id631446426, $4.99
8. Endless Alphabet by Originator Inc., https://apps.apple.com/us/app/endless-alphabet/id591626572, $8.99 (Not a "typing" app but a really fun way to introduce kids to letter sounds as you drag letters back in place to make words to match funny illustrated animations.)

Double the fun: If you have access to two iPads it is fun to have these apps on one iPad and then have the keyboard based apps (or AAC app with a keyboard) on a separate iPad. After the child types the letter they get to complete the activity for that letter on the other iPad as a reward/reinforcer for typing. And of course all of these apps are fun for early literacy play & exploration.

1. Alpha Fun by KrakenEight LLC, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/alpha-fun/id1071728452, FREE
2. Avokiddo ABC Ride by AVOKIDDO, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/avokiddo-abc-ride/id827657068, $2.99
3. Dr. Seuss's ABC - Read & Learn by Oceanhouse Media, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/dr-seusss-abc-read-learn/id1011479119, $5.99 (It's so much more than just the book. This app is full of lots of fun letter activities.)

4. Elastic Alphabets® for kids : Educator recommended learning game for preschoolers by VYAAP TECHNOLOGIES PRIVATE LIMITED, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/elastic-alphabets-for-kids-educator-recommended-learning/id977077498, $3.99
5. Goodnight ABC by Quasar Alliance, Inc, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/goodnight-abc/id539568451, $1.99 (includes a fun interactive scene for each letter and a swipe to add color area)
6. My ABC Train HD by LoeschWare, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/my-abc-train-hd/id707630889, $1.99 (can be customized with your own pics, labels & voice recordings so it can be adapted to specific high interest areas)
7. Starfall ABCs by Starfall Education, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/starfall-abcs/id395623983, FREE
8. Khan Academy Kids by Khan Academy, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/khan-academy-kids/id1378467217, FREE (lots of great activities organized by type of activity and age/grade)
9. ABC Actions by Peapod Labs LLC, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/abc-actions/id715396289, $2.99
10. abc WOW! Alphabet Letters Full by Bologna Games, https://apps.apple.com/us/app/abc-wow-alphabet-letters-full/id533054130, FREE

Want to suggest an iOS app to be added to this list? The best way to reach me is via Facebook messaging over on my OMazing Kids page. I'm pretty picky so they need to be well designed apps and be transparent/honest about any IAPs or subscriptions. **If it's a free app**, please send the link from the USA App Store so I can download and try it out. **If it's a paid app and you are the app developer**, please send the link from the USA App Store so I can look at the info before you send a promo code. I want to make sure that one of my iPads is compatible in order to try it out.

It took me quite a bit of time to compile this list so please "tag" OMazing Kids when sharing it on social media and do not copy/paste it onto other blogs or documents or upload it to servers. I have it available here on my blog and plan on keeping my blog up for the foreseeable future.

Thanks,
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