Whatever model of Android or iOS tablet you have available, it’s a hugely versatile tool when it comes to educating and entertaining children. Here are some of the best apps and features you can make use of in the classroom – some of which you have to pay for and others that are free.

**1 Dive into 360-degree videos**

This is the most basic form of virtual reality, a full sphere of video centred on the spectator who can view an environment in any direction. The content works with VR headsets but is also available through browsers and mobile devices. Launch a 360-degree video in the Facebook or [YouTube apps](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzuqhhs6NWbgTzMuM09WKDQ) and children can tilt it around to change the view as the clip plays (a simple search should turn up some 360-degree content that will be clearly labelled). It’s a more interactive way of exploring everything from distant countries to underwater shipwrecks (check out [Discovery’s YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLiCk2I6PXl5qm0CTvO6zXt3k33GTmcIvk) for some great educational content).

**2 Get creative with photo taking**

The Android and iOS camera apps are simple enough to use and can be deployed to record anything from a field trip diary to the results of a science experiment or a class art show. A number of additional apps let you stitch pictures together and add stickers on top; [Pic Collage for Kids](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/pic-collage-for-kids-best/id977081997?mt=8) is one of the best but there are others out there, while [PicLab](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/piclab-photo-editor-collage/id597851882?mt=8) lets children add filters, text and various other effects.

**How to teach coding and programming**

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**3 Make music – no experience required**

Tablets are well-known as music-making devices, even among professionals, and there are a plethora of apps available that make good use of the tablet’s extra screen space compared with a mobile phone screen. These range from apps that enable you to add effects to existing tracks to apps to help you compose something from scratch, note by note. [GarageBand](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/garageband/id408709785?mt=8) (iOS) and [Music Studio](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/music-studio/id328608539?mt=8) (iOS, £10.99) and [Caustic 3](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.singlecellsoftware.caustic&hl=en_GB) (Android) are worth a look, while for younger children apps such as [ABC Music](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/abc-music/id420949855?mt=8) (iOS, £2.29) and [Animal Band](http://storytoys.com/apps/animal-band/) (Android and iOS) can help nurture the musical creativity of your kids. There are plenty of more specialised music apps available, so you should be able to find something to suit your children’s age and even particular topics or instruments.

**4 Record radio shows and podcasts**

Alternatively, you can make music (or indeed any kind of audio) and then use a tablet to record it. Again, there are a lot of apps available for the job, from the free and basic to the feature-packed and premium. Have a look at the retro-looking [Voice Recorder Free](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/voice-recorder-free/id685310398?mt=8) (iOS), the rather spartan [Smart Voice Recorder](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.andrwq.recorder) (Android) or the professional tool [Cubasis](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/cubasis-music-production-system/id583976519?mt=8) (iOS, £39.99), for example. Tablets have basic recording apps as standard, but there are plenty of third-party alternatives available if you have the budget for them.

**5 Make immersive and interactive notes**

In iOS 9, Apple revamped the native Notes application to make it much more powerful than before. Along with extra formatting controls, individual notes can now incorporate web links, checklists, photos taken within the app, sketches and miniature maps, making the app perfect for a whole range of tasks. Children could use Notes to record what happens on a field trip, to research a particular event in history, or for any other purpose where different media needs to be mixed with text.

**6 Do the maths with Angry Birds**

One of the most successful mobile games of all time, [Angry Birds](https://www.angrybirds.com/play) or one of its sequels (iOS/Android, £0.79) can also be educational. For example, assign numbers to the different coloured birds (or the pigs) to give each level a score and test if kids can calculate the highest and lowest possible scores. Or take advantage of the game’s realistic (if cartoonish) physics engine to predict what’s going to happen with each strike – if a bird hits a structure at a certain angle where will it fall? Get the children to identify the optimum place to strike and then see if they’re correct. You can get children to write stories about the game, design their own levels, and create related artwork as well.

**7 Add augmented reality to the real world**

The free [Aurasma apps](https://www.aurasma.com/) (Android/iOS) allows children (and adults) to overlay real-world objects with digital graphics, including posters and doorways. It might sound complicated, but it’s easy to use. When viewed through Aurasma and a tablet’s camera, targeted post-it notes and classroom displays can launch photos and videos or interactive graphs and charts.

**8 Start up a class blog**

Starting a blog through a browser app can be confusing and difficult – something such as [Easy Blog Jr](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/easy-blog-jr/id716354615?mt=8) (iOS, £2.99) makes the process much more straightforward. Kids log in by tapping on their picture (so it’s suitable for shared devices), and they can then combine text, video and images into a blog post that goes live with a couple of taps. It makes web publishing as simple as it should be. For older students, [Blogsy](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/blogsy-for-wordpress-blogger/id428485324?mt=8) (iOS, £3.99) is a more complicated alternative with a host of extra capabilities, while Google’s own [Blogger](https://www.blogger.com/) (Android/iOS, free – requires a Google account) is another option to consider. In each case there are controls that give you final approval over what’s posted online.

**9 Test your children against Siri and Google Now**

When you buy a tablet you get [Siri](http://www.apple.com/uk/ios/siri/) or [Google Now](https://www.google.co.uk/landing/now/) included – the digital assistants that respond to your voice and can look up almost anything on the web. Whether you want to compile questions for a quiz or you’d prefer to test the knowledge of your class against these artificially intelligent apps, there are many ways to use them. For simple questions, have your pupils race to answer first; for more difficult ones, they can write down their answers in advance and see if they’re right. Try “When was the battle of Trafalgar?”, “How far is it to the moon?”, “What’s four times six?” or “What’s the capital of France?” and you can see what they’re capable of.

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**10 See the world**

It’s easier than ever to take a virtual tour of the world for whatever lesson or topic you want to link the idea with. Apple’s [Maps app](http://www.apple.com/uk/ios/maps/) (iOS) includes a detailed 3D-flyover for some major cities (the options appear automatically when available). [Google Maps](https://www.google.co.uk/maps) (Android/iOS) has added 3D buildings in some areas and includes street view too (press and hold on any road for a closer look). [Google Earth](https://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/)(Android/iOS) lets your kids see the contours and landmarks of the planet and can even overlay nuggets of information thanks to Wikipedia.

**11 Get someone else to read the story**

If story time is a regular event there are various ways you can save your voice or just give the kids some variety. [iBooks](http://www.apple.com/uk/ibooks/) (iOS) has an extensive audiobook library but which is rather plain in appearance; on the other hand you can choose something aimed directly at children like [Read Me Stories](http://readmestoriesapp.com/) (Android/iOS, free), [Farfaria Story Time Best Book Reader](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/farfaria-story-time-best-book/id491771721?mt=8) (Android/iOS, free) and [The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr Morris Lessmore](http://morrislessmore.com/) (iOS, £3.99). Some of these apps are more like interactive movies than ebooks – with animations and clips that children can respond to – though the costs can quickly add up if you’re buying individual titles.

**12 Study the night sky**

A tablet makes a great stargazing tool if your children are studying the pattern of the cosmos, and with the right app you don’t have to wait for the sun to go down – you can simply point the tablet up at the sky and it will show the constellations as you move it around. [SkySafari 5](http://skysafariastronomy.com/) (iOS, from £0.79), [Star Walk Kids](http://starwalkkids.com/) (Android/iOS, £2.29), [SkyView Free](https://itunes.apple.com/app/skyview-free-explore-universe/id413936865?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4) (Android/iOS) and [GoSkyWatch Planetarium](http://www.gosoftworks.com/GoSkyWatch/GoSkyWatch.html) (iOS, £2.99) are among the best apps, though there are more. While most are premium priced, many also provide a basic free edition so you can try them out before buying. The apps can even be used in daylight, but are most effective when pupils can see the stars in the night sky as well as on their device display.

**13 Tune into worldwide radio**

There’s almost no end to the number of hats a tablet can wear – jukebox, map, e-reader, television and, importantly, radio. Using an app such as [TuneIn Radio](http://tunein.com/)(Android/iOS, free), one of the best radio apps available, kids can experience music and talk shows from all across the world in dozens of different languages, with more than 100,000 stations to choose from. If you’re studying a foreign culture, it’s one way of bringing a taste of it into the classroom.

**14 Document learning progress**

[Seesaw](http://web.seesaw.me/) (iOS/Android, free) is a relatively new app, but it’s hit the ground running with a suite of excellent tools enabling students to keep a record of what they’re learning (and parents can get involved as well). Photos, videos, drawings, text, web links, pdfs and material from other apps can all be incorporated, and teachers have the option to log into the journals (and approve work) from any device. A recent update added blogging capabilities to the app and, thanks to the intuitive accounts system, a whole class can alternately share one tablet device if necessary.

**15 Set up a class webcam**

If you can fix a tablet somewhere suitable and have a few pounds to spare then [iCam](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/icam-webcam-video-streaming/id296273730?mt=8) (Android/iOS, from £3) does a great job of turning the device into a private webcam that you and the children can log into and view from any web browser. Perhaps you want to keep an eye on the class vegetable patch or some wildlife outside the window, or maybe there’s another class somewhere else in the world that you have a special partnership with and would like to contact on a regular basis – there are all kinds of different ways to use the app.

**16 Make your own movies**

You probably know how to use a tablet’s camera app to record a movie, but you might not realise just how versatile it is. The default iPad app includes a time-lapse mode for recording a scene over a long period of time and then shortening the results (scroll up in the mode list to find it). Other apps can lend a hand too: use [Stop Motion Studio](http://www.cateater.com/stopmotionstudio/) (Android/iOS, free) to build a movie from a series of pictures, [Shadow Puppet Edu](http://get-puppet.co/education/) (iOS, free) to add voice narrations, music and text, or [ChatterPix Kids](http://www.duckduckmoose.com/educational-iphone-itouch-apps-for-kids/chatterpixkids/) (iOS) to turn inanimate objects and drawings into animated talking heads.

**17 Produce your own comics and storybooks**

The process of producing a comic (or storybook) develops writing, drawing and design skills all at the same time, and apps such as [Book Creator](http://www.redjumper.net/bookcreator/) (Android/iOS) and [ComicBook!](https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/comicbook%21/id436114747?mt=8) (iOS, £2.29) give kids everything they need to put together their own creations through a tablet. Whether you want your class to adapt existing images into something new or would prefer to allow the kids to start from scratch, there’s a wealth of creative features available covering text, graphics and drawings, and you can easily export the results in physical or digital form for others to enjoy as well. You could get a class to write their own superhero story or fairy tale, or start a story which children can then finish off.

**Five of the best apps that help teachers communicate with parents**

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**18 Create 3D digital models from photos**

With the right software, a digital 3D-model can be created from a series of photos taken at different angles, which is exactly what [123D Catch](http://www.123dapp.com/catch) (Android/iOS) from Autodesk does. It turns any photographed object into a model that children can then view from any angle inside an app, upload to the web for other people to look at or even turn into a physical object through a 3D printer. In a digital world that’s becoming more and more about virtual reality and 3D space, it’s a useful introduction into how these digital models are created and applied inside apps (and it’s a lot of fun too).

**19 Translate foreign words and phrases instantly**

From the simplicity of the post-it note approach applied by [FlashSticks](http://flashsticks.com/)(Android/iOS, free) to the full-scale language learning
experience offered by [Duolingo](https://en.duolingo.com/) (Android/iOS, free), there’s no shortage of apps out there to help children get to grips with a foreign tongue. As far as classroom fun goes, [Google Translate](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.android.apps.translate&hl=en) (Android/iOS, free) is worth trying out: there’s a special camera mode that converts text into a specified language on the fly, so you can play around with signs, headlines, blocks of text and more while exploring the basics of a foreign language. Audio and text translation features are also included.

**20 Learn the basics of programming**

Is the next Mark Zuckerberg hiding in your class? Children are being encouraged to get coding earlier than ever, and [Cargo-Bot](http://twolivesleft.com/CargoBot/) (iOS, free) is one of the best ways of teaching them the basics while keeping them entertained – the music and visuals are all to the highest standard and the levels pack in plenty of replay value as well. If Cargo-Bot doesn’t seem suitable then [Hopscotch](https://www.gethopscotch.com/) (iOS, free), [Tynker](https://www.tynker.com/)(Android/iOS, free), [Lightbot](https://lightbot.com/) (Android/iOS, £2.29) and [Move The Turtle](http://movetheturtle.com/) (iOS, £2.99) are all excellent alternatives you might want to investigate.

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