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Young children's learning with digital media.

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Summary: This article reviews a selection of studies on digital media and learning for young children ages 3 to 6. The range of digital media for this age group is growing and includes computer-delivered and online activities; console video games; handheld media, occasionally with GPS or an accelerometer, in cell phones and other wireless mobile devices; electronic toys and learning systems; dolls and robots that move and talk; physically active games using dance pads, sports equipment, or stationary bikes as the interface to the game; and online communities and social networks; among others. Research has tested the effectiveness of several digital media products for young children's learning and has found, for example, improvements in children's knowledge and skills for thinking, planning, observing, problem-solving, reading, language, mathematics, hypothesis formation and testing, creativity, and collaborative learning. However, many of the most popular commercially available digital media products for young children have never been studied or tested, and so there is no definitive evidence of their benefits or drawbacks. The article concludes with a discussion of research approaches that could be used to investigate young children's processing of digital media in order to improve the design and effectiveness of future media products intended for this age group.

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