



and learn

A personal computer can open up a world of knowledge for your children – and, through gameplay and interactive stories, learning will be fun as well as factual. We take a look at the vast array of educational software designed to captivate and concentrate the minds of children of all ages



Normally, our group tests are comprehensive: with word processors, for instance, we review everything on the market. In the broad category of educational software, which covers everything from storybooks to 'A' level study, this simply isn't possible. We unearthed over three-hundred titles, shortlisted a third and, after much agonising, whittled the final count down to forty-three. Inevitably, we've had to omit a lot of good titles, but we have included a section on the principal publishers and the other products they produce.

Storytime & adventure

Stories are essential to a child's development, and all these titles also encourage children to explore and use the mouse.

Kipling's *How the Leopard got his Spots* is narrated by Danny Glover with music from Ladysmith Black Mambazo and stunning illustration by Lori Lohstoeter. Children can be read to – with an activity page after each chapter – or read for themselves, with lots of hidden pictures and videos to be found in the text. The guide is P J Rabbit and

there's more to do in his burrow, with books on Kipling, Africa and the illustrator as well as four games.

Winnie the Witch is a very short story, narrated by Sandi Toksvig, but exploring Winnie's ramshackle mansion brings all sorts of surprises. Weird things happen to nearly everything you click on – and weirder still when you've found Winnie's wand. It's delightfully done, with illustrations and animation in a very un-computery style, reminiscent of the cartoonist Ronald Searle.

Are you sitting comfortably? Then listen to Daphne Oxenford, the doyenne of BBC's 'Listen with Mother', read *The Gingerbread Man*. Aimed at the very young, with simple, if rather slow, animation, there are surprises to click on and a rather unusual activity – making real gingerbread.

In the same 3+ age bracket, there's rather more fun to be had with the *Tortoise and the Hare*, from the creators of *Just Grandma and Me*. The CD contains French, German and British versions. Simon the Storyteller will narrate the story or you can explore page by page – there's lots to click on, lots of good music and lots of surprises. The cartoon animation is excellent, and there's a printed book to help coax the kids away from the PC at bedtime.

'In an old house in Paris that was covered with vines, lived twelve little girls in two straight lines.' The smallest was Madeline, who decides to put on a puppet show to help Mr Benet and the animals he looks after. To do this, she needs to explore Paris to collect the

objects she needs, solving problems and learning a smattering of French and Spanish on the way. Though ze accents are French, apart from the velvety tones of narrator Christopher Plummer, *Madeline and the Magnificent Puppet Show* is a US TV spin-off – rhyming 'Madeline' with 'wine' is an obvious giveaway. Nevertheless, it's absolutely charming, with Impressionistic graphics and Madeline's infectious giggle.

You don't have to be able to read to use *Circus*, but the breadth of skills required for the activities and puzzles should appeal to children older than the suggested 3-7 age range. You get to watch and participate in the acts – on a simple level you can help the clowns mend their car, or dress up for the big parade, but activities such as judging the height and timing of the trapeze artists take skill and perseverance. There's all sorts of things to explore outside the big top, including a tent full of musical instruments and the clown's caravan full of surprises.

A cartoon dog is the guide in *Gus goes to Cyberopolis*, where there are six places to visit and lots to do: in the Post Office you can write letters by dragging pictures into the blanks; the Science Dome has a floating/sinking game and a virtual terrarium; there's arithmetic and matching in the Aquarium; a dictionary and atlas in the Library;





and in Gus's International Diner you can read and hear the names of the various objects in six languages. As well as nine main activities, there are lots of surprises and a long-term strategy – find Gus's three Cyber-buddies at every location and you bring a statue to life.

From the people who brought Monty Python to the PC, comes the *Great Word Adventure* – the second *Li'l Howie* CD. The presentation is superb, with excellent animation and music combining to create a great feelgood factor. It's also very funny. Having prompted for name and age, Howie suggests you might like a really cool name instead, such as Grand Poo-Bah or Pineapple Princess. Choose from the list, and this is the name by which Howie (a bear), and his friend Stinky (a skunk) will address you when they speak. The superbly silly, but deceptively educational games include: rhyming in a sing-along ballroom scene; word ordering; a variety of hangman where the aim is to bathe a reluctant Stinky; category matching; remembering sequences; word-searches and more. Teachers or parents can add to the word lists. The review copy was noticeably American in its choice of words, but a UK version should be available by the time you read this.

No-one does the ABC quite like *Dr Seuss*. Two strange furry creatures, Ichabod and Izzy, take you through the alphabet, reading each page – 'Many mumbling mice are making midnight music in the moonlight.' Every page has a multitude of animated surprises awaiting a click – you can do anything from popping bubbles to making Aunt Annie's Alligator dance. There's lots of good music, as well as a paper version of the book. Though its US origin means we have 'Zee' at the end of the alphabet, the sheer quality and fun make this a wonderful adaptation of the good Doctor's wacky work.

Sticking with the alphabet, UK families might feel more at ease with Roger Knight's *Lettermen go to a Party*. Read by English children, and opening with a wicked giggle, this isn't quite as showbizzy as Seuss, but has loads of activities. There's counting, making party invitations, bursting balloons and icing cakes, as well as spelling, matching and, of course, Zed not Zee.

Another favourite is *Sesame Street Letters*. Oscar and Telly introduce you to the neighbourhood. You can play the matching trash game with them or visit Big Bird to play rhyming, Ernie and Bert to play with shapes or Snuffy to find things that begin with certain sounds. But that's only the beginning. Each character's house has a



storybook, a phone to talk to the other characters, a radio to hear songs and a TV to see video clips of the shows. And there's lots more to play with. It's very small-child proof, as the keyboard is disabled in use and the mouse pointer slowed down. Like the TV series, it offers great entertainment while painlessly teaching literary skills.

English

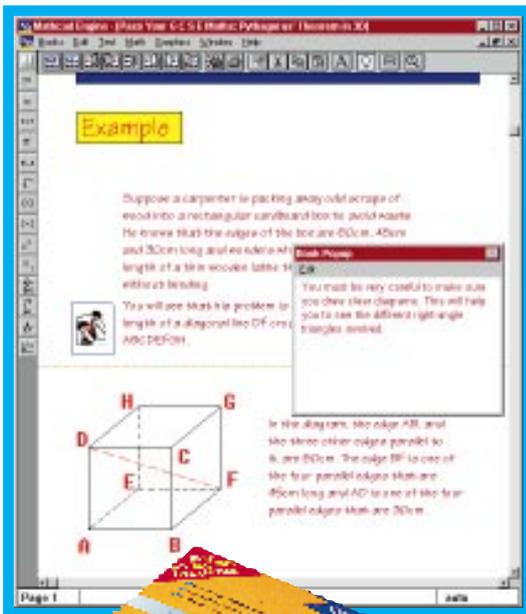
Something a little more grown-up, *10/10 English* uses a Dos-based arcade game environment for the teaching of English. Games start with a shoot-em-up: spell the word from the moving letters and, as you progress, form sentences from jumbled words with the right capitalisation and punctuation. Other activities include grabbing a missing word from a moving display, completing similes, crossword-style word fitting and a snakes-and-ladders type game that deals with adjectives, comparatives and superlatives. Well thought out, if a little old-fashioned, this has genuine educational value by providing children with plenty of English practice.

Moving from Lang to Lit, it's Shakespeare time. Andromeda's *William Shakespeare – The Complete Works* is exactly what it says – all the plays, poems and sonnets,

in the Oxford University Press texts used by UK examining bodies. Twelve of these are the Schools Texts, with copious introductions, commentary and background material. In addition, there is a glossary, texts on the man and his times, and full search facilities. An integral word processor allows the student to write essays or take notes while reading the texts. Though the content is of very high quality, the interface is rather awkward – comforts such as a 'Tile Windows' command would be welcome.

Macbeth, jointly created by Harper Collins, Attica and the BBC, includes the full spoken text and numerous video clips. Though less academic than Andromeda in its background text, the multimedia makes this an exciting approach.





blocks. As you progress to the higher levels, the maths gets more complex and so does the gameplay.

In Survey you count creatures that appear on the screen and then analyse the results; you need to move fast as they certainly do – even the snails!

Other games investigate the differences between possibility and certainty. As with English, there are different levels for different abilities, and records are kept of each child's performance.

Cruncher is a spreadsheet for children, and it's a lot more fun than Excel. A series of animated tutorials takes the learner through the basics. You can attach sounds and animated stickers, and the program reads back words and figures from a worksheet. Despite the fun approach, it has a good set of functions, and will produce charts. There's a series of projects included, covering activities such as saving up for a personal stereo or making investment decisions.

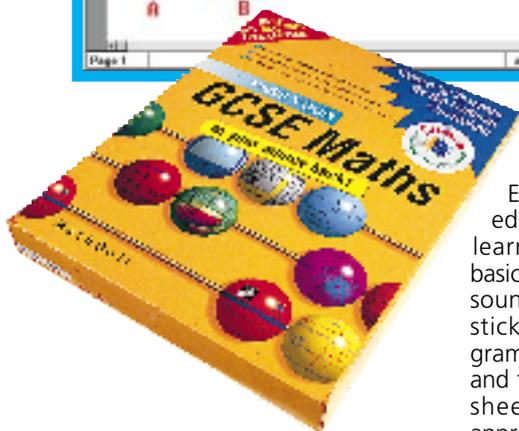
Pass Your GCSE Maths is encouragingly sub-titled 'Or Your Money Back' – and they mean it. It comes from the creators of Mathcad, with material by the teachers at St John's College,

Southsea. Though the teaching is clear, with plenty of worked examples, quick quizzes and past exam pages, the environment at times makes things confusing. Really, the student needs a crash course in Mathcad before using this, as there are many distractions in the way of buttons that create symbols and formulae on the existing page.

History

Nelson's Navy lets the user explore a gunship to discover what life was like at sea in Nelson's time, as well as additional material on naval history and Nelson himself. Though there's a lot here, it's a bit dull and lacking in multimedia glitz. Nor does it help that the hot spots don't automatically light up or change the cursor – you have to turn on an overlay to see them.

Also from Anglia comes the rather better **Vikings**. This has as its front end an excavation in York. From here you travel back in

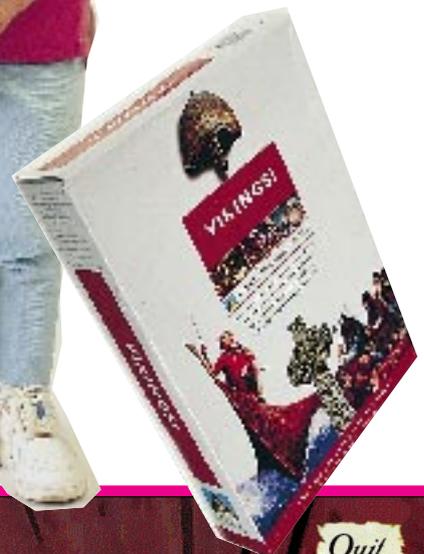


There are interviews with Judi Dench, Ken Campbell and others, 35 minutes of video from the BBC production starring Nicol Williamson and Jane Lapotaire and more clips from a Zulu version. If your child is studying the play for GCSE English, this is full of sound and fury signifying plenty. **Romeo and Juliet** and **Midsummer's Night's Dream** are also available in the same series.

In terms of word count, **Corel's Classic Books** takes some beating, with a collection of literature, scientific and religious documents embracing 3,500 titles. There's comprehensive searching, annotating and highlighting and a US dictionary. Descartes rubs shoulders with Conan Doyle, Virgil with Jules Verne, and there are short biographies of 200 authors. They've even managed to squeeze in 300-odd pictures and 15 minutes of video. An absolute bargain, and it only takes up a centimetre of shelf space.

Maths

We've chosen just three maths titles, but they are all UK National Curriculum related. **10/10 Maths – Statistics** also uses the familiar Dos arcade game style to put across the subject. The Bomber game begins with bar charts which you have to match to their corresponding tables by adding and blowing up

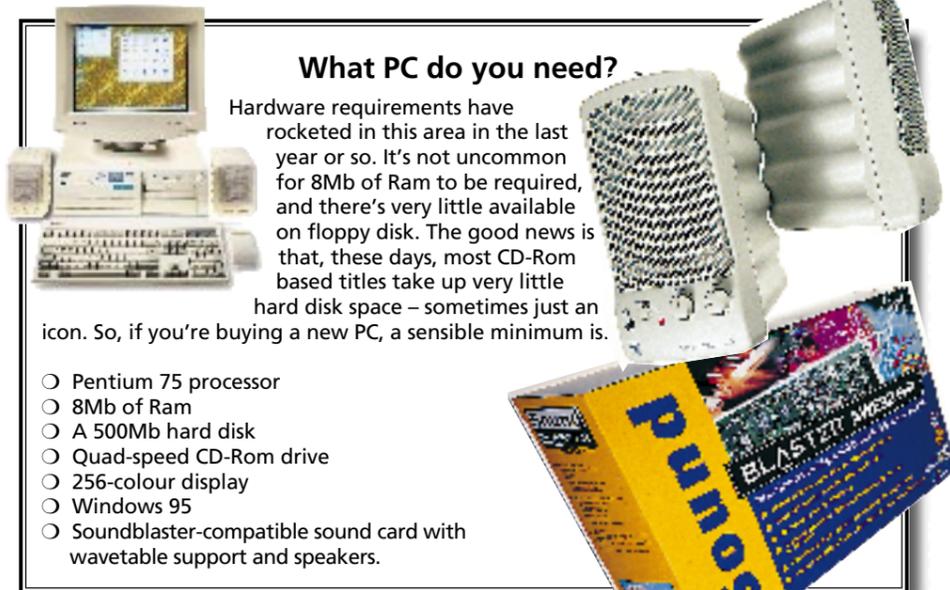


time via a selection of old photos (they had good cameras in 1066) to 950. Here you explore the village, meet farmers and woodworkers and find out about Viking life. Anglia still hasn't mastered the art of getting the cursor to change over hot spots, but if you find the statue of Thor, he'll show you where they are. Back in the 20th century, there's a photodatabase of finds, a timeline and an article on place names. Finally, you can 'meet the experts' – an historian, a scientist and an archaeologist for more information.

Encompassing not just Vikings, but Aztecs and Ancient Egyptians too, *How would you survive?* provides a lot more fun and, it seems, more hard facts. It's lushly pictorial – you can navigate by clicking on pictures, or take a more structured journey via the index and contents. There are lots of movies and quizzes and a nice touch is that in some topics you can switch to another era – comparing, say, Egyptian food with that of the Vikings. This well-packed CD includes timelines and a 'How do we know?' section that concentrates on historians and archaeologists. There are lots of pop-up information boxes, but you can't copy the text.

Geography

First, you need an atlas – of the many available, the best come from Microsoft and Electronic Arts.



What PC do you need?

Hardware requirements have rocketed in this area in the last year or so. It's not uncommon for 8Mb of Ram to be required, and there's very little available on floppy disk. The good news is that, these days, most CD-Rom based titles take up very little hard disk space – sometimes just an icon. So, if you're buying a new PC, a sensible minimum is.

- Pentium 75 processor
- 8Mb of Ram
- A 500Mb hard disk
- Quad-speed CD-Rom drive
- 256-colour display
- Windows 95
- Soundblaster-compatible sound card with wavetable support and speakers.

Encarta 96 World Atlas packs in a vast amount of both data and entertainment. The maps are detailed and you can zoom down to 200km above the ground. Each country has a 'Geolibary' covering geography, politics, economics and statistics, and a 'Culturgram' covering the history and lifestyle of the inhabitants. There's over 15,000 words on the UK alone, and more multimedia insight is provided by 'Family Portraits' – collections of photographs, video and text that show the Hodson family tossing pancakes in Surrey or the Demirovics braving sniper fire in Sara-

jevo. There's lots of other pictures and videos and over 300 world music samples.

The *3D Atlas* has minimal country content, concentrating rather on physical geography, with rotating globes showing everything from tectonic drift to the decline of the ozone layer. Interactive time-lapse scenarios show topics ranging from projected rises in sea-level to urban growth but, though there's plenty of spoken commentary, there's little text. There are videos of biomes, short video documentaries on topics such as nuclear power and acid rain, fly-throughs of mountain ranges and six fascinating city satellite photos.

Physical World, a Yorkshire TV Thompson title, investigates the entire planet – atmosphere, biosphere, lithosphere and hydrosphere. It looks at the effects of natural disasters, such as drought, floods or earthquakes, and provides nine in-depth studies of people and their environment, ranging from Snowdonia to the Amazon. It's packed with pictures, animations and video, including ITN news footage. As with the other YITM (Yorkshire International Thompson Multimedia) series, there's a glossary and trail-saving facility.

Moving from natural to man-made disasters, *Dwindling Resources* is about that which we take for granted – water, fossil fuels and forests. All are threatened. An overview video takes you through the main areas, and at any time you can stop and jump to a related topic, ranging from deforestation to the Kuwait oil fires. Each of the main topics is themed into general

Children's software manufacturers

Company	Contact number	Titles
10 out of 10	0113 2394627	Low-cost school/home education for 5-16 years.
7th Level	01932 355666	High-quality multimedia – mostly games, but science and maths titles are on the way.
Ablac	01626 332233	Educational specialists covering 3-14 years; especially good on maths.
Andromeda	01235 529595	A range of UK-produced titles include <i>Patrick Moore on Space</i> .
Anglia Multimedia	01603 615151	Sister to TV company – serious National Curriculum-based titles used in 10,000 schools.
Attica	01908 570113	Reference and educational titles include music, science, geography, art and French – some schools' editions. Ordnance Survey maps coming soon.
Broderbund	01429 273029	Primarily known for games such as <i>Myst</i> , but a maths/logic puzzle title – <i>The Zoombinis</i> – is on the way. Titles are UK localised.
Corel	01703 814142	Large range of low-cost titles – including storybook, early learning and literature – all North-American based.
Disney Interactive	0171 605 2400	<i>Lion King</i> , <i>Pocahontas</i> and <i>Aladdin</i> in storybooks and activity.
Dorling Kindersley	0171 753 3488	Stunningly presented reference/edutainment encompassing science, history, geography, nature and more. Mostly UK-authored.
Electronic Arts	01753 549442	There's more <i>Madeline</i> and <i>Sesame Street</i> – other titles include animals and early maths.
Europress	01625 859333	Fun School series and children's classics including <i>Alice</i> , <i>Peter Pan</i> and <i>Treasure Island</i> .
Grolier	01865 245770	Also well known for its encyclopedia.
Guildsoft	01752 895100	Large range of lifestyle, edutainment, games and activities, mostly of US origin.
Harper Collins	0181 741 7070	Other titles include <i>Collins Cobuild</i> – for teaching English as a foreign language.
Iona	0181 296 9454	Educational specialists with a range of £19.95 titles, mostly early learning.
Living Books	01429 520250	Formerly Broderbund, but now a separate company – high-quality storybooks localised for UK.
Mathsoft	01276 452299	Creators of Mathcad – a cross between a spreadsheet and a drawing program.
Microsoft	0345 002000	Other <i>School Bus</i> titles include the <i>Ocean and Solar System</i> ; numerous other edutainment titles include <i>Dangerous Creatures</i> and <i>Ancient Lands</i> . Other creative titles are <i>Fine Artist</i> and <i>Creative Writer</i> . All are excellent.
Mindscape	01444 246333	Mostly games, but reference titles include the <i>World Atlas</i> . Co-produces Beatrix Potter titles with Penguin.
New Media	0171 916 9999	UK educational specialists – principally for schools, though retail products available.
OUP	01865 267979	High-quality storybooks with narration from Robbie Coltrane, Sandi Toksvig and Harry Enfield, plus lexical reference culminating in the awesome 20-volume <i>English Dictionary</i> on CD-Rom.
Penguin	0171 416 3000	Stodgy storybook and early learning from Beatrix Potter and Topsy and Tim. Seven-volume reference library due in July.
Scops	01252 722223	Mostly for younger children – titles include Grimm brothers and Hans Andersen as well as the <i>Professor Solvadore</i> science series.
Softkey	0181 246 4000	Large range of £12.99 US-authored titles. Dearer titles include <i>Compton's Encyclopedia</i> , <i>Leonardo</i> and a UK-localised Infopedia.
Software Marketing	01753 620022	Large range of serious arts and science titles, from £24.95 upwards.
YITM	0113 2461528	Schools contact for serious UK educational titles from Yorkshire Television and Thompson Multimedia, covering early learning to 'A' level business studies – see Software Marketing for retail contact.

issues, history, social issues, alternatives and actions. This last is probably the most educationally stimulating as it covers both research projects and conservation strategies. There's a huge range of topics covered, from the rise of coal in the Industrial Revolution to the questioning of World Bank funding for dam projects. This is a well-presented title that pulls no punches.

Lightening up somewhat, *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* is an old favourite revamped for CD-Rom. Carmen's gang roam the world looting everything from jewels to the Khyber Pass. Your job is to collect enough evidence of the villain's identity to secure an arrest warrant and follow the clues as to what country the gang visits next. You're helped by photographs of the countries, and a videophone that lets you talk to your chief or the delightfully loopy travel agent, Shir. Bundled with the CD is

a real book – the *Hutchinson Guide to the World* which, as well as being useful for the game, is a mine of information. It's a shame there isn't slightly more factual content in the game itself, but most kids tend to skip the fact boxes in the excitement of the chase. Nevertheless, learning rubs off, and we now know the name of the only Hindu monarchy.

Languages

French is the most widely-learned second language in the UK, and once again becomes the target for the Dos arcade approach in *10/10 French*. Concentrating on the written language, it starts off at an easy level, matching words to pictures to prevent ladybirds climbing up the Eiffel tower, and a slightly more chal-

lenging word-search where you have to find ten animals or females. Move up a few levels and the instructions are in French and we leave simple vocab and rearrange words to make sentences, match verbs to pronouns and nouns to articles.

En Marcha (Spanish, but the series includes other languages) concentrates more on comprehension and the spoken word. An alphabetic lexicon contains words illustrated within phrases. The browser contains words arranged in a conceptual tree – from the solar system down to the dustbins. You can hear and read appropriate phrases then record and compare your own attempts. The spoken phrases are almost as terrifyingly fast as the real thing, and this authenticity is carried





The *Magic School Bus* may be familiar from TV – your teacher, Ms Frizzle, is about to take you on another bizarre school trip, when you've stopped playing with all the fun things in the classroom. Young Arnold doesn't want to go on the trip, so his body becomes the destination. The bus explores his lungs, heart, liver, brain, kidneys, skin and intestines – all in 3-D animation. There are all sorts of games and experiments to perform, and you have to visit all twelve parts to complete the game. It's done with great humour and good taste (Arnold doesn't appear to have any rude bits), and is genuinely educational – after the function of each organ is graphically illustrated, you can discuss it with the class and teacher.

Staying with the human body, in *Dr Health'nstein's Body Fun* – the aim is to travel the road of life, staying healthy, and complete four challenges at the end of each sec-



through to the city game. In this, armed with a small map you make your way around a city, picking up clues from various places such as the park, market and post office – each clue tells you where to go next. Alas, some streets weren't marked, others were inaccessible and, despite trudging up the Calle de Segovia several times, we were unable to find the drogueria, and had to abandon the search. A pity, as we had already expanded our vocabularies considerably.

Science and Nature

The *Cartoon Guide to Physics* covers just mechanics. Lucy, a real human, and her cartoon friend Ringo, offer a crash course (often literally so) in dynamics. We start with motion, and in about 20 minutes have progressed via

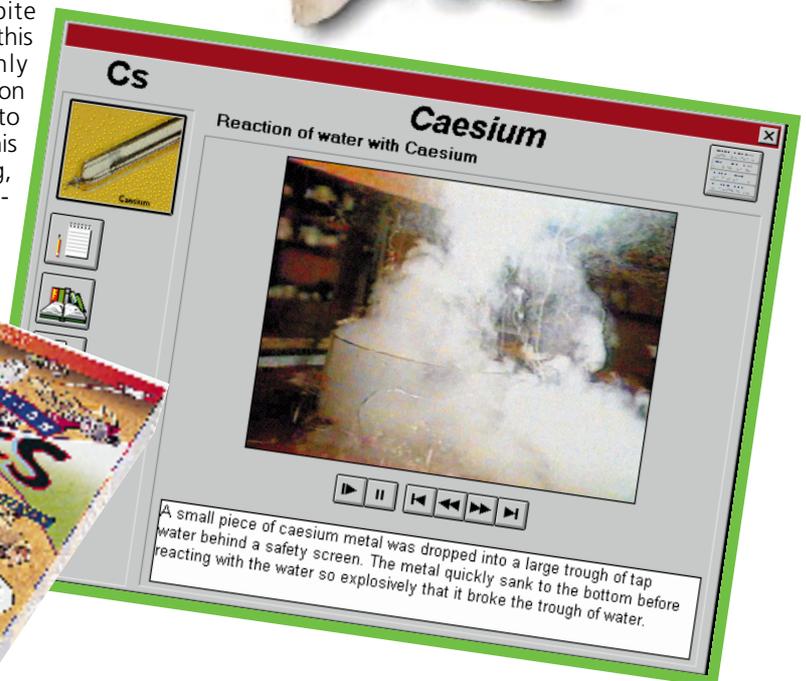
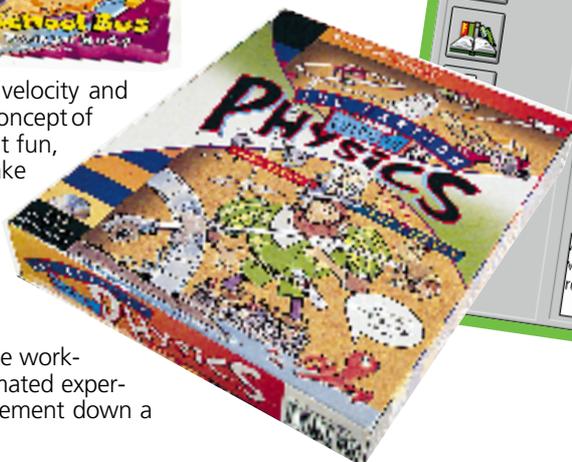


slope or the trajectory of projectiles. The cartoon game approach belies the seriousness of this – you're encouraged to use formulae and consult graphs to calculate, for example, what angle and initial velocity is necessary to fire poor Ringo from a cannon to a distant point. There's a glossary, and finally the hall of fame, featuring thinkers from Aristotle to Schrodinger. Despite the fun interface (this must be the only Windows application with a rap intro to the on-line help) this is serious learning, excellently produced.



speed, velocity and acceleration to the concept of gravitation. It's great fun, but rather a lot to take in all in one go. Ten more topics in Lucy's world include Newton's Laws, energy and orbits.

Moving on to the workshop, there are animated experiments such as movement down a



tion. At meal times, you drag and drop the available foods onto your plate – with a constant read-out of the fat, fibre, carbohydrate and other elements. At any time you can check your nutritional state on the Bodyputer, or visit the lab and play games. Build a body from the 'Bag Of Guts' and see what happens when you pump it full of things such as fibre, fat, alcohol or nicotine – or if you really want a salutary health lesson, watch some open-heart surgery on the video.

The **Chemistry Set** is a serious – and expensive – school-aimed study work, which takes the periodic table as its front end. From here you can explore the elements and their compounds, taking in sources, uses, history and literature – with Primo Levi extensively quoted. There are 3-D animated molecular models, lots of pictures and videos of experiments, some wonderfully vandalistic, such as dissolving diamonds or blowing up lab equipment.

Attica's **Periodic Table** takes a more entertaining approach, incorporating Tom Lehrer's 'Elements' song and Roger McGough's poems with a more arty interface. Though there are fewer facts and less video, there's still a great deal of information and an introductory tutorial – it's also much less expensive.

Moving to the living world, Dorling Kindersley's **Eyewitness Encyclopedia of Nature** is a thing of beauty. The presentation and illustration are absolutely gorgeous, and in the same style as the eponymous books. There's tremendous breadth, covering biomes, mammals, fish, the microscopic world and much more. This is not really a serious research tool – you can't copy or annotate most of the text, and with such a huge range it doesn't have the depth for serious study. There's just one page on symbiosis, for example, and nothing on grass snakes. However, with lots of pictures, video and animation, it's an incredibly rich asset for any family with the slightest interest in nature.

Andromeda's **Mammals** features stunning photography by Oxford Scientific Films. The contents are listed by habitat and eating habits rather than by biological classification. The emphasis is on



pictures, rather than words, though there are basic facts on each mammal shown, and there's a built-in editing suite to create your own multimedia slide shows.

General Reference

We could easily devote an entire article to encyclopaedias, but the best is the **Encarta 96 World English Edition**. Much of the US-specific content, such as American history and sport, has been dropped to make way for such topics as the BBC, cricket and Formula 1 motor-racing. It is vast, packed with facts and multimedia – especially sound – and at a street price of around £50 is terrific value.

A worthy runner-up is the **Hutchinson Encyclopedia** – an all-British offering from Attica. Though less deep and with less multimedia glamour than Encarta, it covers a greater range of subjects.

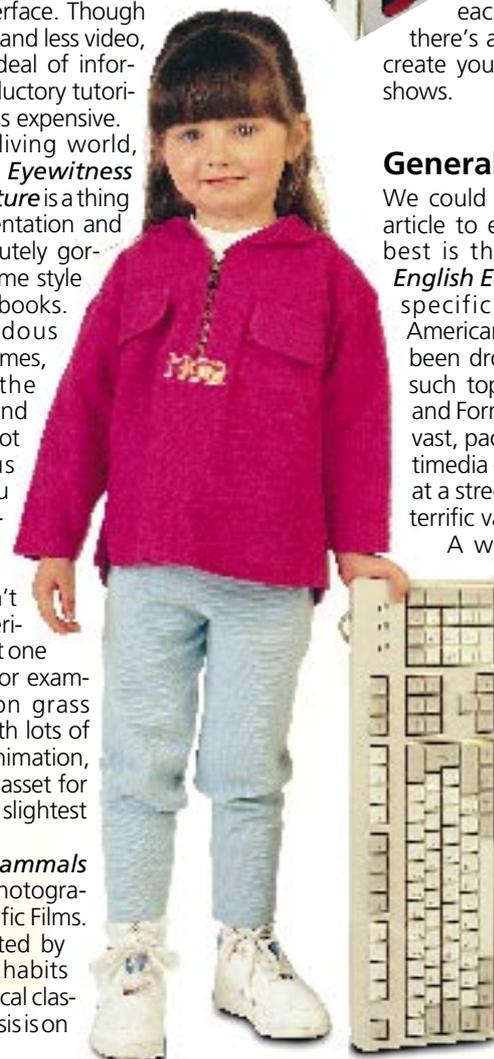
For younger children, **My First Incredible Amazing Dictionary** is no idle boast. Over 1,000 words are explained in text, UK English speech and pictures. As well as an alphabetic index, it's

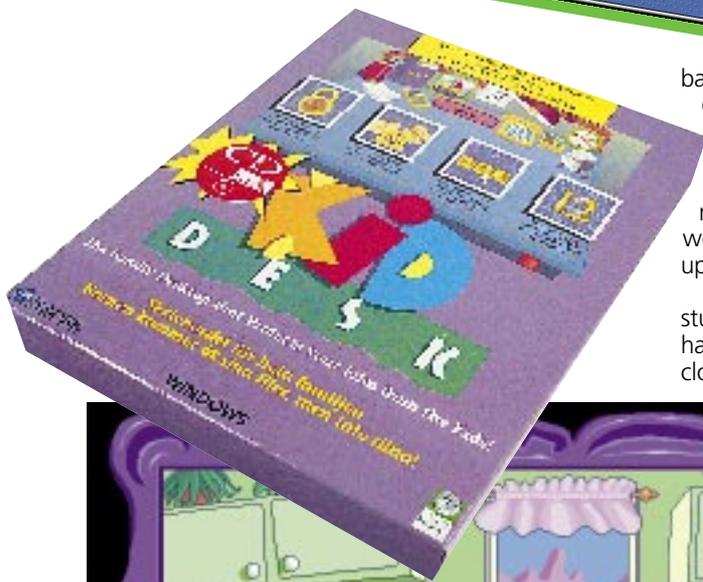
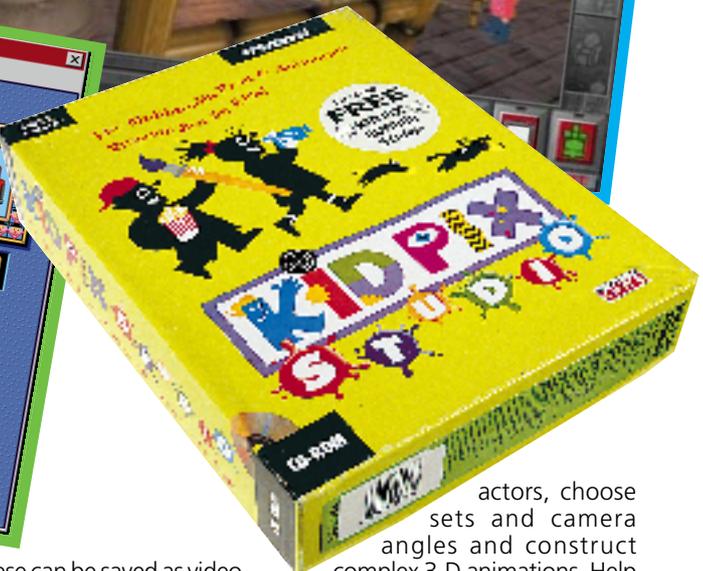
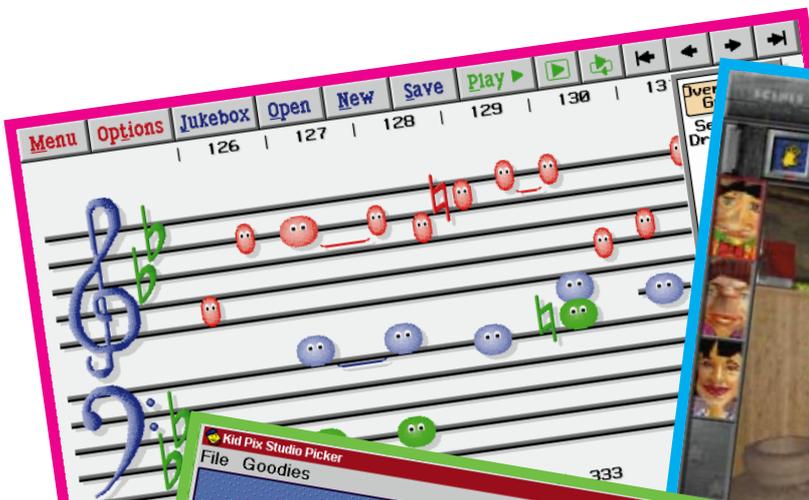
themed – click on 'muscle' for instance, and the page will contain a box entitled 'Inside me' which leads to more bodily bits and pieces. All the pictures do something when clicked – the trumpet plays, the muscles flex. There are three games – noise matching, spelling and comprehension. With the last, it's almost as much fun getting it wrong as right. The question 'What do aeroplanes have: bananas, forks or wings?' provides an appropriate illustration for each answer, but only with wings will the aeroplane take off.

Creative

Guildsoft's **Music Ace** is one of the few titles available on floppy disk. 24 lessons with Maestro Max take you through the basics of reading music, from the stave to sharps, flats and key signatures – each lesson has a game for practice. The best bit is the Doodle Pad, where you can drag notes onto the staves to create a piece of music, then play it. Ready-made scores range from Pachelbel's Canon to Yankee Doodle, and you can use the on-screen keyboard or plug in a Midi instrument. Great fun, but a shame it stops short of note-length and timing.

Kid Pix has always been a favourite – a wacky drawing and painting program with lots of stickers and silly sounds. There are brushes that drip, blow bubbles and grow trees, and a mixer tool to add all sorts of crazy effects. This latest version – **Kid Pix Studio** – adds motion. With Moopies, the brushes draw animated lines and objects. The Stampinator lets you place stickers on moving paths and Digital Puppets respond to key strokes with movements that you can record and play





back. All these can be saved as video (AVI) files. You can't combine the modules into one big movie, but you can create a multimedia slide show, and include one movie in a Kid Pix still picture. One word of warning – AVI files can take up an awful lot of disk space.

As Orson Welles said, a movie studio is the best toy a kid could have. *3-D Movie Maker* comes a close second – you get to 'block'

actors, choose sets and camera angles and construct complex 3-D animations. Help is at hand from McZee, a very strange character with probably the worst Scottish accent outside Hollywood. Great fun, but it takes a lot of hard work to make a good movie – just as in a real studio.

Other

Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing for Kids, in the neglected educational field of keyboard skills, provides a rather naff cartoon environment and some well-considered exercises. As this is for small hands only, the first three rows and the space bar are used. There's far less pressure on the student than in the adult version, but every visual encouragement is given to break the habit of looking at the keyboard when typing.

Another neglected area is security. *Kid Desk* gives each child a password-protected custom desktop, with a range of utilities such as a calendar, notebook and mail. Other applications can be launched, but only if the 'system administrator' (Mum or Dad) has enabled them. It won't deter the serious teenage hacker for very long, and parents should also be wary of what they put on the desktop – Windows 3.1 Write, for example will edit any file, and Windows 95 'Save/Open' dialogs allow files to be deleted. Used wisely, though, it should provide peace of mind where younger kids are concerned.

Tim Nott



Children's software packages

Title	Distributor	Price (incl VAT)	Age range	Platform	Medium (3.5in/CD-Rom)	Ram req'd (Mb)	Educational rating	Entertainment rating	Value for money
10/10 English	10 out of 10	£14.99	6-16	Dos	3.5 or CD	1	4	2	5
10/10 French	10 out of 10	£14.99	6-16	Dos	3.5 or CD	1	4	2	5
10/10 Maths – Statistics	10 out of 10	£14.99	6-16	Dos	3.5 or CD	1	4	2	5
3-D Atlas	Electronic Arts	£49.99	8+	Windows	CD	8	4	3	3
3-D Movie Maker	Microsoft	£39.99	8+	Win 95	CD	8	2	5	5
Body Fun	Softkey	£19.99	7-12	Windows	CD	4	3	3	3
Cartoon Guide to Physics	Harper Collins	£39.99	12+	Windows	CD	8	4	4	4
Chemistry Set	New Media	£176.19	10+	Windows	CD	8	4	3	2
Circus	Grolier	£29.99	3-7	Windows	CD	8	3	4	4
Classic Books	Corel	£22.32	11+	Windows	CD	8	4	2	5
Dr Seuss ABC	Living Books	£30.00	3-7	Windows	CD	4	4	4	4
Dwindling Resources	Software Marketing	£29.95	12+	Windows	CD	4	4	3	4
En Marcha	Software Marketing	£39.95	14+	Windows	CD	4	3	3	3
Encarta 96 World Atlas	Microsoft	£49.99	8+	Win 95	CD	8	4	4	4
Encarta 96 World English Encyclopedia	Microsoft	£50.00	10+	Win 95	CD	8	5	5	5
Eyewitness Encyclopedia of Nature	Dorling Kindersley	£39.99	8+	Windows	CD	4	3	5	4
Gingerbread Man	Europress	£19.99	3-6	Windows	CD	4	3	2	2
Great Word Adventure	7th Level	£29.95	6-9	Windows	CD	8	5	5	5
Gus goes to Cyberopolis	Guildsoft	£29.95	3-8	Windows	CD	8	4	3	4
How the Leopard got his Spots	Microsoft	£29.99	6-11	Windows	CD	4	3	4	4
How would you survive?	Grolier	£29.99	7-12	Windows	CD	8	4	4	4
Hutchinson Encyclopedia 96	Attica	£49.99	10+	Windows	CD	4	3	4	4
Kid Desk	Iona	£19.95	4+	Windows	3.5	4	2	3	4
Kidpix Studio	Broderbund	£30.00	3+	Windows	CD	4	2	4	4
Lettermen go to a Party	New Media	£14.99	3-7	Windows	CD	4	4	3	4
Macbeth	Harper Collins	£49.00	12+	Windows	CD	4	4	4	2
Madeline & the Magnificent Puppet Show	Electronic Arts	£39.99	5+	Windows	CD	8	4	4	2
Magic School Bus – Human Body	Microsoft	£29.99	6-10	Windows	CD	4	3	4	4
Mammals	Andromeda	£29.99	10+	Windows	CD	4	3	4	3
Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing for Kids	Mindscape	£34.99	5+	Windows	3.5	4	3	2	2
Music Ace	Guildsoft	£29.95	8+	Windows	3.5	4	3	4	4
My First Incredible Amazing Dictionary	Dorling Kindersley	£29.99	4-7	Windows	CD	4	4	4	4
Nelson's Navy	Anglia	£29.99	10-14	Windows	CD	4	4	2	3
Pass Your GCSE Maths	Mathsoft	£24.95	14+	Windows	CD	4	3	1	4
Periodic Table	Attica	£24.99	11+	Windows	CD	2	4	4	4
Physical World	Software Marketing	£39.95	14+	Windows	CD	4	4	3	3
Sesame Street Letters	Electronic Arts	£34.99	3+	Windows	CD	8	4	4	3
The Cruncher	Ablac	£34.99	10+	Windows	CD	4	4	4	4
Tortoise and Hare	Living Books	£30.00	3+	Windows	CD	4	3	4	4
Vikings	Anglia	£29.99	7-11	Windows	CD	4	4	2	3
Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?	Broderbund	£30.00	9+	Windows	CD	4	2	4	3
William Shakespeare – Complete Works	Andromeda	£34.99	12+	Windows	CD	4	4	2	4
Winnie the Witch	OUP	£29.99	5-10	Windows	CD	4	2	4	3

