

THE ULTIMATELY COOLEST WAY TO RAISE YOUR KIDS IN THE NEW ERA

# GEEK PARENTING

Issue #65 May 2018



## FACEBOOK DRAMA

HOW IT  
ALL  
TURNED  
OUT

## EARTH DAY

CLEANING UP  
OUR PLASTIC  
POLLUTION

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FOR  
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ONLINE?



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**PEEK-A-ZOO**  
SOCIAL LEARNING

## EDITOR'S NOTE

**S**ocial media, and Facebook in particular, has been the talk of the news lately and not in a positive light. Many of us have been unknowingly sharing our information about ourselves with internet giants. Some of us may have been vaguely aware, but purposely decided not to think much of it. At the time, it didn't seem like it could come to much harm. That was until the recent data breach...

It's a fact that information about us is what companies find most valuable, in order to properly find the right customers and target audience. This can be beneficial for both. But what needs to be clear is the choice in what we put online that goes to these companies. We wouldn't want our little ones to suddenly be bombarded with product ads because they accidentally clicked on a link.

Unless you cull social media completely, there will always be some bit of data that will be collected, whether that's what you've been clicking on or where you've been commenting.

It's a trade off between sharing data and not being connected. That's not to say it is impossible to live without social media, quite the opposite is true. However, with the way the world is moving, and how the next generation is basically growing up with this level of connectivity, it's a choice they should make for themselves later on rather than one we make for them from the off. We should be aware of everything that social media is and does, and make sure our little ones are as prepared as they can possibly be before exploring the digital world.

As always we love to continue hearing feedback from our readers. Get in touch at:

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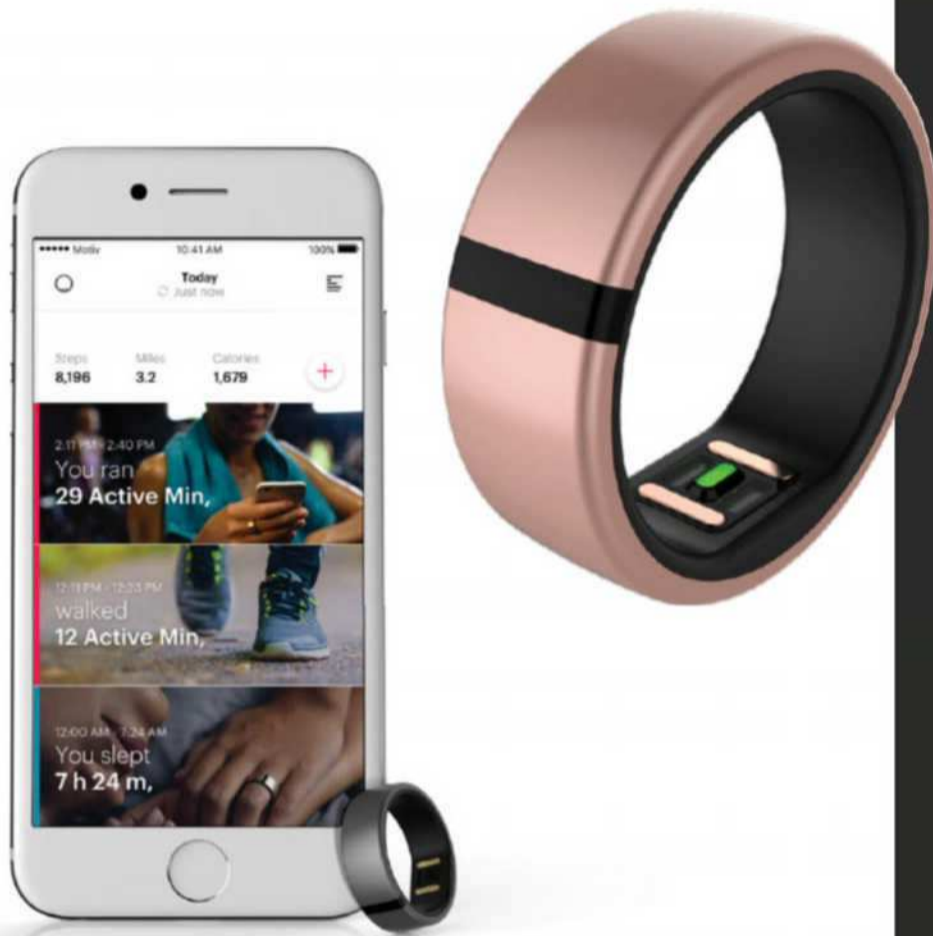
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# THE GEEKY MONTHLY

Bringing you cool news and media from around the globe



## MOTIV SMART RING

Fitness & sleep trackers have become even smaller, or wedding bands have become smarter. Either way this lets you track your run and show that you're taken at the same time. It's waterproof, made from titanium and can run for 3-5 days on a 90-minute charge. The data it collects will sync to an app on your phone via bluetooth so you can prove to your other half that you really are taking your New Year's resolution seriously. Currently only available in the United States, but will be open to international deliveries in the future.

## BYTE SIZED NEWS

### X-Ray Vision Firefighters

A helmet that uses augmented reality to help firefighter see through smoke has been developed. Called the C-Thru, it produces an outline of objects in front of them, which might sound familiar to anyone who plays video games. Firefighters have tested it in California and trial runs have seen them navigate through smoke-filled buildings almost three times faster than without.

### Nintendo Labo

Remember when you were kids and used to television sets out of cardboard? We're sure this was what Nintendo had in mind when developing the Labo. Now it is out, we think it's a fantastic addition to the Switch to really immerse your kids in that same creative imagination we did, albeit in a far more hi tech way. It's available in a \$70 Variety Kit and a \$80 Robot Kit.



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## DID YOU KNOW?

### May 29th is 'Put A Pillow On Your Fridge Day'

Yes you read that right. This peculiar holiday is celebrated in Europe and the U.S. and is meant to bring prosperity and good fortune. It originated in the early 1900s when families would place a piece of cloth or linen from heir bedrooms and put it inside their larder for good luck. The pillow on (or inside) the fridge has become the modern day equivalent.

# SOLO

A STAR WARS STORY





# TOP 5 ALEXA

## GADGETS

## & ACCESSORIES



It's hard to believe that Amazon Alexa Virtual Assistant has only been in our homes for just three years, seeing as it and its rivals have become so entrenched. Launched in November 2014 as part of the Echo Smart Speaker, Alexa was intended to be akin to the computer from the Star Trek original series – in fact “Computer” is one of the devices’ settable wake-up words.

Since then, Alexa has become increasingly connected around our properties, and can now be used to control a bewildering number of products from lighting and heating to door locks and security cameras and is likely to become even further ingrained in our lives. Among the best devices available now are:



# Insteon Hub

While everyone seems to be talking products, the Insteon Hub is looking to control almost anything electrical in your home, and to do it through Alexa as well as an App. Insteon have developed a series of smart devices that all connect to the hub and can be operated remotely by interaction through your device or by shouting at Alexa. Door locks, light switches, smoke detectors – not sure why you want to switch them off – thermostats, and motion cameras are among the many devices that the Insteon can handle. Hand control to your life to a small box of metal and plastic!



*Insteon allows you to turn your lights on or off, close your garage doors, or schedule any of your insteon devices from your phone or tablet, wherever you are.*



# Neato Botvac

**M**ake cleaning less of a chore by getting someone else to do it – or something else in this case. Robo-vacuums have been round for several years but the Neato Botvac is amongst the best on the block. With a unique ‘D’ shape that allows it full access to corners for a complete clean, and with sufficient battery power for a ninety-minute clean even on the Turbo mode before it returns to its charging station. Botvac can be started, stopped, and paused via voice controls through Alexa, so that’s the cleaning sorted.



# Netatmo Weather Station

**N**ormally, if you ask Alexa for a weather forecast, you’ll get a generic prediction from a national weather bureau rather than what may actually be happening right near you. However, if you connect the Netatmo to your Echo or Dot, you get a detailed analysis of what is happening right at your door. And it’s not just weather either; the Netatmo can give a detailed rundown of CO2 concentration, humidity, and even noise pollution levels too, so you’ll get a highly detailed breakdown of your local atmosphere, rather than just the weather.

# Fire TV

**W**ith 4K and Alexa voice control, the latest version of the Fire TV stick can bring together all of your favourite shows in high definition. Tell Alexa to search or give keywords and have it delivered straight to your TV.



**(Top)** The August Smart Lock Pro (\$279.00)  
**(Left)** The August Smart Lock (\$149.00) Requires August Connect Wi-Fi Bridge or August Doorbell Cam Pro to connect to Alexa.

# August Smart Lock

**G**iving over control of entry to your Alexa might seem to be edging towards the unacceptable, but the built-in security features of the latest generation of door locks will stop worry. Designed to connect with Alexa through a Smart Phone App, you no longer have to stress about lost keys and can also check that your doors are locked at any time, and with easy installation, you'll wonder how you got by without it.



# PLASTIC POLLUTION

## BANE OF THE PLANET

**P**lastics – the generic term for a range of around 70,000 different synthetic or semi-synthetic organic compounds based primarily on carbon and hydrogen atoms – were hailed as the wonder materials of the late 20th Century. Waterproof and resilient, the key to the success of plastics is their resistance to water and natural decomposition, and it is that very factor which is now causing so much consternation.

Plastics can be broken down by mechanical actions in the environment or may be introduced as very small particles anyway such as microbeads in cleansers, and those particles are now finding their way into the food chain. The prognosis isn't good but, luckily, we are quickly waking up to the fact and it's not too late to do something about the plastic particle mire in which we find ourselves sinking.

### What's the Problem?

Plastic pollution is defined in two levels; macro (larger than 5mm) and micro (smaller than 5mm), and both are significant issues in their own way.

**Macro Pollution.** Aside from

crisp packets in hedgerows, much of the world's macro-plastic pollution congregates – eventually - in the oceans. There are five recognised 'plastic islands' around the world, each one centred on one of the oceanic gyre's of rotating currents. By getting caught up in these swirling eddies of water, the rubbish becomes trapped and grow as more debris joins it. The esteemed 5 Gyres Institute estimate that each these areas contain at least 5.25 trillion particles of plastic pollution, weighing as much as 270,000 tons, and that the total weight of plastic pollution in the oceans is close to 5.6 million tones!

**Micro pollution.** Plastic pollution of this smaller size comes from two main sources

**“MANY PLASTICS CANNOT BE RECYCLED AND WE NEED TO BREAK OUR DEPENDENCY ON THEM IF WE ARE EVER LIKELY TO RETURN THE PLANET TO THE STATE THAT WE WANT IT TO BE IN.”**



comes from two main sources – broken down macro pollution and microbeads from cleaning products. This level of pollution is more alarming than macro pollution as it is not only more difficult to clean up but is small enough to be able to enter the food chain and become lodged in our systems. The long-term effects of there are unknown but given how badly our bodies respond to foreign material, the prognosis isn't good.

### **Making It Better.**

We have done a huge amount of damage to the planet, but its not too late to do something about it and reclaim it, along with our kidneys and livers. The Secretary of State for the Environment has announced details of commitment to bring back bottle deposits to help curb oceanic plastic pollution, and that is likely to have a significant impact on plastic pollution, but the real key is to use less. And here's how:

*Plastic has been washed up onto numerous beaches around the world. Please make sure to take care when disposing of them.*

- Don't use non-recyclable plastics. If it doesn't have a recycle sign, don't buy or use it.
- Boycott microbead products.
- Buy in bulk to reduce overall packaging.
- Refill plastic water bottles rather than buying new.
- Home cook – reduce the amount of packaging used for ready meals.
- Get your coffee chain to make your beverage in a travel mug, that you happen to have with you, rather than another one of their disposable cups.

Once seen as essential materials, many plastics cannot be recycled and we need to break our dependency on them if we are ever likely to return the planet to the state that we want it to be in. Deposits on plastic bottles is a good start, but we need to do more to even stem the build up of these harmful materials. ●



**THE**

**FACE**

**BOOK**

**DRAMA**

# “AND HOW DO YOU MAKE MONEY?”



es, it might not have been the best question for the senate to ask Mark Zuckerberg. For those who understand social media and understand the digital space in which we now operate, it was a question that certainly raised a few eyebrows. Of course, with Zuckerberg’s response being a quite simple “Senator, we run ads”, we can quickly see how maybe not everyone fully understands how social media operates. Yet these people will most likely be signed up and are still using it in some way regardless of their understanding.

## **SO, WHAT ACTUALLY IS THE CASE ALL ABOUT?**

There are a number of reports as well as conspiracy theories flying around but ultimately and in a quick summary we can say, that in 2014, a personality quiz was

developed by University academic Aleksandr Kogan. The “this is your digital life app” was then placed on Facebook for users to download and take part in and as a result their data was collected. However, as it appears now it wasn’t just those who downloaded the app who had their data collected but also their friends on the site too.

This has resulted in 87 million people having their data siphoned away and potentially used without consent. Adding to this, it is also thought that out of the 87 million some 1,500 user’s private messages were also included in the data set.

However, the problems arose when this data was then sold to Cambridge Analytica (a British consultancy firm who uses data mining and data analysis to form strategic communications) - to which Cambridge Analytica believed they did not know the information had been obtained and sold improperly.

Now of course with this hitting headlines all over the world Facebook and Cambridge Analytica have both blamed original app developer Kogan. As although users gave permission to Kogan’s app to collect their data/information, selling it on was and is against the terms of service.



However as more and more information has come to light our curiosity into the case also deepens and what's more our understanding of what data companies are collecting from us, how they are collecting this information and then ultimately how we can protect ourselves and our kids from this becomes even more important.

What's astonishing to note is that when we start reading about the facts, Facebook was made aware about this particular security breach in 2015 and not only kept quiet on the matter, they immediately made both companies delete the data they had collected.

**“BUT WITH WHAT MEANS DID THEY THEN CHECK THIS DATA HAD ACTUALLY BEEN DELETED REMAINS TO BE SEEN.”**

But with what means did they then check this data had actually been deleted remains to be seen. Once such a data set is collected, manipulated and used, it can then be built into other data sets completely separate from the original.

## **NOW COME THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES**

It goes without saying that Cambridge Analytica played an integral part in the 2016 election and in particular in Trump's campaign success. Naturally however, they do claim that none of the data involved in the recent news scandal was used to help the Trump campaign.

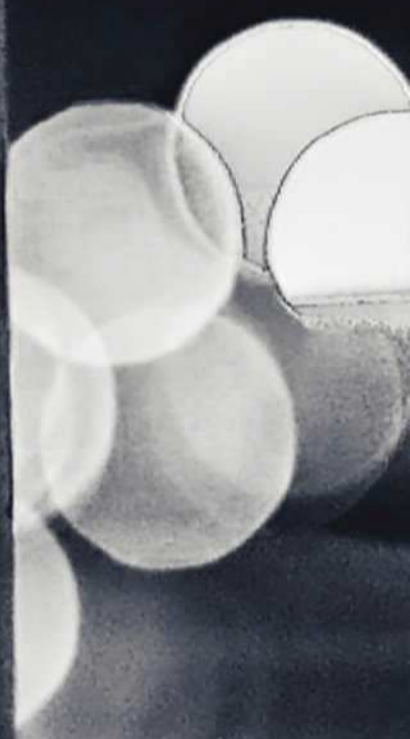
Yet, the conspiracy theories still circulate, with links to Russia also being thrown into the mix. For example, Facebook has stated that they are in constant battle with Russian operators who seek to exploit the social network, primarily for political gains.

Now could this statement actually be true, when we learn that the man who set the wheel in motion, Kogan, had previously received a grant from the Russian government to research social media, although Kogan denies any such links.

And now, the social council is ►



BIG DATA IS  
WATCHING YOU



*Data is the big currency of the digital world. Facebook have recently taken steps to clearly outline how you can control what data gets sent to companies. You may have seen this pop up when opening the mobile app.*

investigating and has went on to charge 13 Russians with interference in the 2016 election along with 3 Russian companies!

Of course we can all draw our own conclusions, but it is up to the Senate to now find out the truth and for the companies and individuals involved to stand up, defend their actions or hold their hands up and admit liability.

### **WERE YOU ONE OF THE 87 MILLION PEOPLE AFFECTED?**

Facebook to all intent and purposes have handled this security flaw well, by keeping everyone in the loop and providing extra security measures.

If you were one of the ones who potentially had their data used, Facebook would notify you and your friends, with 1 of 2 messages (one for you directly as the person who used the profiling app and the second for your friends who might not have used the app but through association may have had been subject to the data breach.

Facebook has also provided details on what data might have been gathered as well as providing a tool, which they specifically developed, where you can check and give you peace of mind to whether you have or haven't been affected.

### **HOW IS DATA DOWNLOADED FROM FACEBOOK?**

There are a number of ways in which your data can be obtained via social media channels you use.

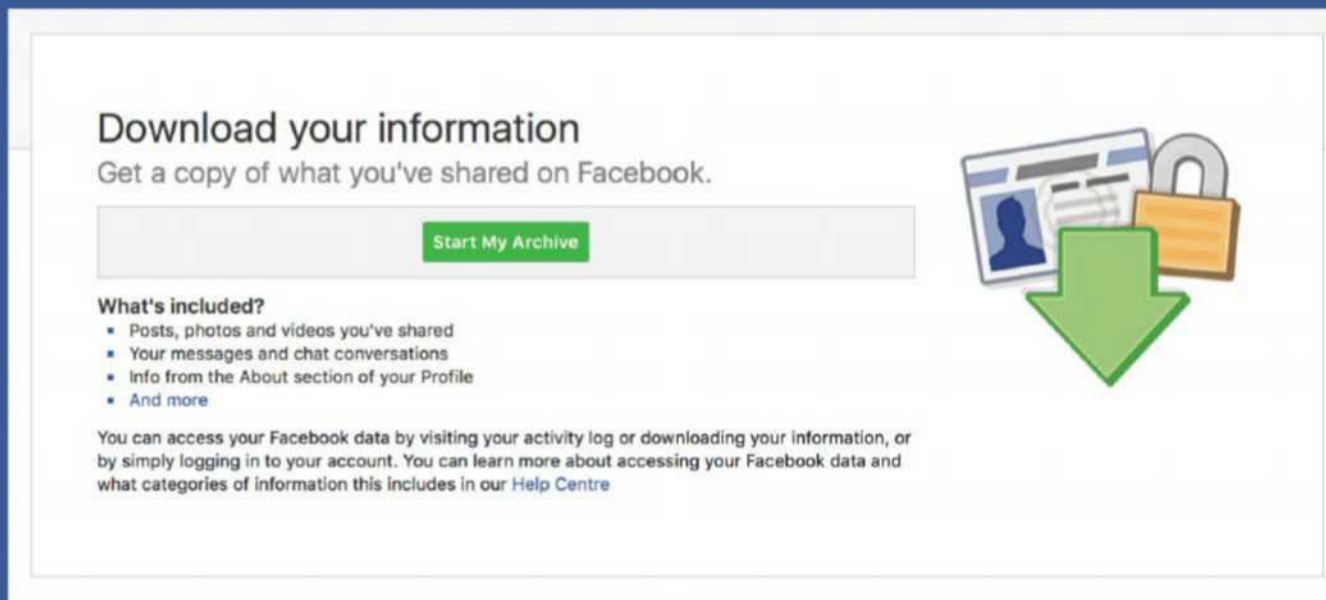
Facebook however have now put in place a number of protocols to help up the security of their site and your data, making it much more difficult for your data to be shared with third parties.

For example, they have since stopped third party apps examining the likes, status updates and other information which may be shared online.

Both religious and political views are also now out of bounds and most recently they have also re-written their terms of service and data use policy to be much clearer and user friendly in terms of the language they use and overall understandability.

However, you can also download your own Facebook data and find out what data you're giving away by looking within the apps settings section. At the bottom of the General tab, you will find a section called "download a copy of your Facebook data". Yes, scarily it really is that simple!

You will be met with a couple of security questions however and you will have to go through a ▶



*On a desktop browser, go to settings on top right (arrow > settings) and you will see a link to download your facebook data. After a few minutes, facebook will email you a link to fully download everything you have done and shared on the platform from the time you joined.*

security check but once you're in you can then up your security by archiving some of your history and data, making it less visible and less likely to be used – rightly or wrongly.

## **DEBUNKING THE MYTHS OF FACEBOOK SECURITY**

What doesn't help when it comes to security is the number of statuses that make the rounds across social media which of course immediately go viral and claim certain false features of Facebook.

Statuses such as, "if you type BFF in a comment on Facebook and it goes green, then your account is safe. If it doesn't then you need to change your

password".

Then there's the ones which state that if you type certain words into the comments boxes then it will trigger certain animations.

Of course, the first is completely false and the second is nothing related to account security in any way!

How we expose the falseness of such claims is difficult but by knowing a little bit more about setting up your security settings correctly might help and dare we say it, but sometimes using a little common sense even online is needed!

Whatever we understand and take from these hearings and investigations, on thing is for sure, when we sign up to such social media sites like Facebook,

security and how we approach security should be of paramount importance. This as well as understanding and being aware that your data will be used by advertisers in some way.

This last point is interesting, because as individuals, being advertised to isn't actually the problem, it is how our data has been collected which is.

Yes, some might say that Facebook weren't at fault because they were originally told that the data which would be collected would be anonymized and only used for research purposes. However, they still agreed that this was "ok" and when they did find out about the breach originally, they didn't speak out.

Then you have Cambridge Analytica who believed that they licensed their data correctly and who obtained the data through a tool provided by Facebook, which they believed to be fine as they only use data with informed consent. However, as a consequence the firm is now conducting its own third-party audit into the case and to also prove that the data in question

was actually deleted so not used in any election campaigns.

Ultimately what this data scandal has identified is that much more needs to be done when it comes to these tools and research methods being used for harm.

As individuals we also need to take responsibility to protect our own data and make sure we do read and understand just what we are signing up for, when we tick that all important join box!

Then comes the ultimate solution, there will always be a free version of Facebook, so you will always receive some form of advertising and data sharing. Or alternatively you could sign up to a paid for version of Facebook which would guarantee that it would be ad free with no data sharing but would be costly for users, as well as restrictive in terms of your connections.

Data is a huge issue, especially if it is being misused and used for political and religious reasons but when presented with the options above which do you think would win? And which one would you sign up for? ●



Online  
kids

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# HOW SAFE ARE KIDS ONLINE?

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he digital space has evolved so much that now we can only think back to a time when we didn't have mobiles, tablets, smart watches etc. and where we weren't connected to the world at large by the simple touch, or swipe of a button.

For younger generations however, growing up in the digital arena is completely the norm. Using the internet and being online 24/7 is the norm – which means for parents keeping kids safe online becomes a big issue. One which every parent takes seriously and takes responsibility

for by setting up certain restrictions due to age of content, setting parental controls so you can monitor activity, screen time etc.

**But just how safe are kids online, especially in light of the recent YouTube and Facebook trials?**

With Mark Zuckerberg currently being questioned by Congress about the Facebook scandal resulting in 87 million people having their data taken and sold to Cambridge Analytica (the company who provided the data services to the Trump campaign) and YouTube being questioned about potentially breaking a number of child protection laws - can we really trust our children to be online? On these sites, either watching content or creating profiles themselves, and just what are the dangers? And it's not about whether or not we trust our kids online, it's whether we trust ▶

these social media giants with our kid's details, their information, vulnerabilities and naiveties etc.

Of course, since the Facebook scandal has hit the headlines, Facebook has admitted a security flaw and apologised for its part, but for parents it goes much deeper than a simple apology.

As when we start looking into this further, this isn't the first time Facebook has been in the media. According to BBC reports the social media giant has a checkered record when it comes to managing child exploitation as well as reports which evidenced how they have used children's feelings/emotions to sell marketing space and opportunities in the past!

How can such a security conscious company allow for not only the data scandal to arise in the first place but also to be involved in other security flaws, then be trusted to technically do business with children?

As we've mentioned, it's not just Facebook that have been hitting the headlines, but social media channel YouTube have also hit headlines for potentially breaking child protection laws, where they have been reported to have collected data from under 13-year olds!

With over 80% of children in the US aged six to 12 years old signed

**“ ...IT’S WHETHER WE TRUST THESE SOCIAL MEDIA GIANTS WITH OUR KID’S DETAILS, THEIR INFORMATION, VULNERABILITIES AND NAIVETIES ETC.”**





up to watch content on YouTube and YouTube kids, that is a lot of children exposed to images, adverts and other marketing tools that realistically they shouldn't be.

A number of campaign groups have since come together to issue a formal complaint to the US Federal Trade Commission who are now looking into the matter further – and again it links back to how the social media site is using people to target advertising and, in this instance, target their advertising inappropriately!

**Social media is like a drug – it is completely addictive!**

What we need to know about social media in general and of course that of which has been highlighted by Facebook is that getting kids on social media faster is of great financial gain to these organisations. So of course, their marketing will be specifically

focussed on this younger demographic.

Introducing adverts, hashtags to follow, a new messenger app created by Facebook completely aimed at 6-12-year olds, YouTube for Kids, leading up to the original version of YouTube when they're old enough, are all smart examples of how organisations are finding work arounds to market to kids younger.

Then when we start to actually think about some of the tactics these companies use, that might have previously washed over us, it really shows how unsafe our children can be online. They're almost grooming kids to become social media addicts! Ok, so maybe a little extreme but you can see the line in which we're following.

It's this addictive nature that we need to be aware of. Thinking of it like tobacco companies marketing to kids. The sooner you can get



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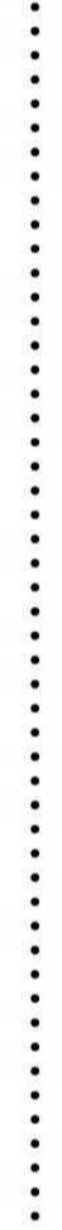
**“ALL COMPANIES  
AND INDIVIDUALS  
WHO COLLECT  
DATA MUST ABIDE  
BY GDPR AND  
THIS WILL AFFECT  
ONLINE PLATFORMS  
TOO.”**

someone adopted, the sooner you can have them addicted. Hence the reason government decided to regulate the tobacco industry’s marketing strategies and marketing to under 16-year olds.

In this same way, does social media need to be monitored and regulated? As do we know the true extent to what damage social media is causing or certainly how it is affecting younger generations behaviour by them becoming early adopters?

If we look at all of the information in the news and we zone in from a parent’s point of view it is worrying. Worrying because we know, from our own personal experience how addictive social media can be. However, there are also now more and more reports coming out which highlight that for our younger generations social media can also cause depression. Mainly because it doesn’t often portray real life, cyber bullying is a real threat and it can create feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Then comes the worry that when they do officially sign up to these sites, what about their data, can you guarantee that all of the content which is exploitative to children has been removed? And as parents do we even know the answers to these questions due to our own lack of





experience with social networking?

### Things that can help

It is believed that GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) will help in some way by providing much stronger regulation when it comes to companies collecting and using your personal data, without your direct and apparent consent. All companies and individuals who collect data must abide by GDPR and this will affect online platforms too.

It has also been recommended that the language for children also change. Making it much more child friendly when it comes to explanations and terms and conditions for kids. Providing them with the opportunity to understand what they're signing up to and understand why security is important online.

For these social media sites to

be transparent would also help. Transparent with all of the facts, mainly so parents know exactly what is what and that we can make informed decisions about what's best for our kids.

YouTube are also reportedly working on the potential to have curated videos for the platform. So instead of using algorithms to keep video content rolling, parents will now have the option to choose handpicked videos and those suggested by YouTube. The aim is to help prevent children stumbling upon videos that aren't suitable or have been corrupted and making these videos distinguishable and removed because they have been handpicked.

Knowing everything we know and listening to everything we hear, we still crave to be connected to social media and in this sense, it is like an addiction. It's how we keep in touch with everything and

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# YouTube Kids

*With recent reports of certain youtube playlists being filled with both children videos and x-rated videos (disgustingly created on purpose by disturbed individuals), there has been more emphasis on ensuring the safety of youtube kids as the go-to kid-friendly alternative.*

everyone. Its how we find out about the latest news reports, watch live streams of breaking news as well as catch up on things we might have missed.

But at what cost does this addiction come? Ultimately it comes at the cost of your data, your personal information shared and used so that you can stay connected.

Yes, there are privacy settings and security, but data will still be collected, and information still used by just signing up!

For kids, we keep the horrors of wars and murders away from them, protecting them from a world that we feel is unsafe until they're old enough to understand more, so why wouldn't social media also come under this

banner?

Ok, we might have painted social media in little bit of a negative light, but what we want to highlight is that sometimes it's not just about setting the right parental controls and security levels for kids to be safe online, it's about knowing and understanding the potential consequences of kids being online and then educating our children on these risks, helping them to understand just what they're signing up to.

In its simplest sense is it simply a trade off - your data for you to be connected and maybe the best advice we can offer our children is that quite literally nothing in life is free! ●



# WHY SO MUCH GAMING...

## FEELING INTIMIDATED BY YOUR GAMER TEEN? HERE'S WHAT YOU SHOULD DO...

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ideo games are steadily making their way into everyone's homes. From the NES Classic Edition to Playstation 4, teens are spending most of their free time playing games online with their friends and people around the

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world. While they are engaging with peers and others, teens seem to be shutting their parents out along the way. Parents with teenagers today are finding it almost intimidating to raise children in world full of technology. Children today have access to so much more than in previous years, when us parents were growing up.

It can be very frustrating trying to communicate with your teen in the first place, then you add video games to the mix and it is literally like standing in a

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loud heavy metal concert screaming for someone across the mosh pit. While it is important for kids to socialize and develop personal relationships in life, online video games are not the best way for this to occur, but as time goes on, it is almost the only way pre-teens and younger teens seem to socialize. It is important for parents to try and engage their teens in activities not involving technology. Some great ways do this include, but are not limited to:

- **FAMILY DINNER.** Yes this still can happen. Have your teen put the video games on pause for 30 minutes while you all sit down and enjoy a family dinner together. Have your family leave their phones behind, and if they can't leave them behind, take them from them. Engage your family in conversation during dinner, whether they like it or not it is important to maintain a good relationship, especially during teen years.
- **A DAY TRIP OR SMALL WEEKEND VACATION.** I say small because most teens today do not have the tolerance to be away from home or technology for long. Go to the beach, go hiking, or camping. Get your teens involved in activities with nature and only let them use their devices for photos and memories along the way. The good news about the beach and camping, there is no Wi-fi.
- **MUSEUMS.** Believe it or not teens can have interests outside of comparing K/D ratios and levelling up their characters, whether it's art or history, or even an aquarium, they are likely to find something to enjoy in learning about the real world. For example, if they are playing the game 'Assassin's Creed Origins' (a franchise that is known to pack it's games with

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The most important thing you, as a parent to a teen engrossed in video games is; remember to breath and remember YOU are the parent. It can be frustrating when your children have no real interest outside of technology. While they are sitting on their butts screaming their heads off at people all over the place, it can be hard to not smash the game console with a sledgehammer. Instead of doing that, take a deep breath (or drink a glass of wine, whatever) and ask our teen to shut the game off and find something more constructive to do with their time. Whether it is studying or stepping outside to physically do something, get them off the game system as often as possible.

Another thing to consider about your teen; video games are a huge part of children's lives these days. Do not be afraid to move your kid over and play a few games with them, it is a great way to spend time your teen, and helps keep communication open. Also, if you're willing to sit down and show real interest in something that they enjoy, they will be more open to spending time doing things others enjoy as well. Do not get me wrong there will exceptions, there always is. ●



# VR, AR & MR



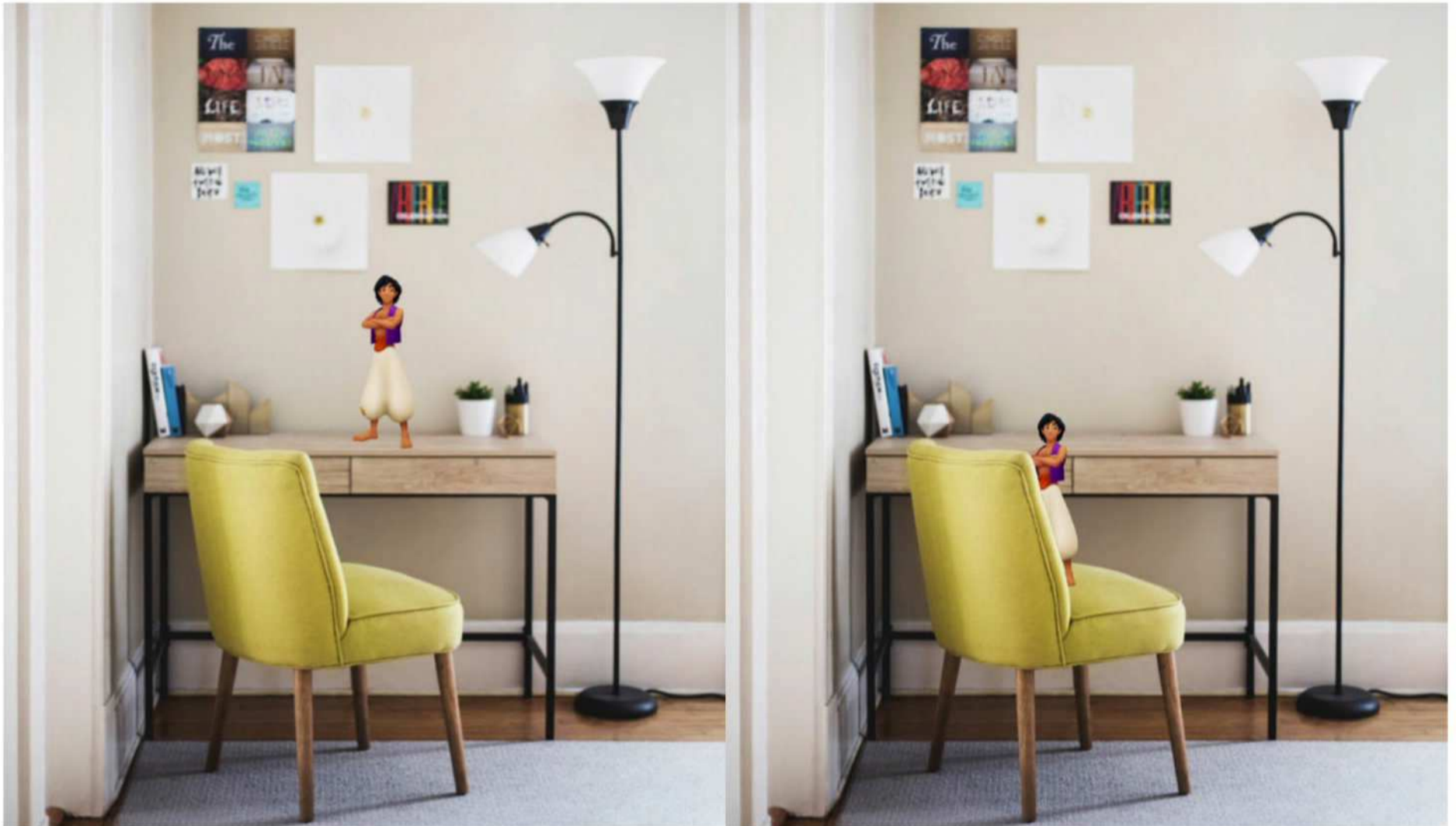




# JUST WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

# A

As a species, we love acronyms and apply them whenever possible. Much of the time we do it through laziness with terms such as AK in text to mean “At Keyboard” (as opposed to AFK, when you aren’t there - “Away From Keyboard” in case you were still wondering), and some we do to prevent having to fumble over big technical words, like ABS instead of Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene or DEET for N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide. And then there are some we use because we are just plain stupid, such as the Comité Régional Alpes Provence in France, or the Senior Housing Assistance Group in Seattle, which you can work out for yourselves.



We love acronyms, particularly in technology, so it was no surprise when Virtual Reality devices hit the market and were foreshortened to VR. But then along came AR and MR, and it just got confusing. What does it all mean?

## VR

Starting with the original, VR stands for virtual reality, which was originally marketed as immersive multimedia. Basically, you strap on a headset and enter another, virtual world. These are the

**(ABOVE LEFT)** Augmented reality is able to detect a surface like a table and place a virtual object on top of it.

**(ABOVE RIGHT)** Mixed reality has a greater level of interaction with the environment. It could place a virtual object behind a real world one for example.

headsets that have gained so much coverage with seemingly everyone having one stuck on their heads. The vast majority of these run off mobile phone Apps and games and aren't as startling as the hype would have you believe.

That said, the tethered device developed by Sony for use with the PS4 is startlingly good and playing Resident Evil or Until Dawn while strapped into it is likely to lead to some serious jump scares!

## AR

Standing for Augmented Reality, these devices – Google Glass being one of the better-known ones- integrate digital information with the user's environment in real time. Like a heads-up display in a fighter, a locally worn device supplies information you on top of what you are actually seeing. Some – like Google Glass display this on a small transparent screen in front of your eye, but some of the new and more clever versions, such as the Intel Vault, which used lasers to create an image directly on the user's retina. Obviously shining lasers in your eyes is right up there with not running with scissors, but we are told that the Vault is safe.

AR technology promises to enhance how we see and

interact with the world around us and is certainly becoming a major tool in many industries. AR headsets are usually small, glasses type affairs that can be almost indistinguishable from those.

## MR

Denoting Mixed Reality, MR sets are a kind of cross over between VR and AR. Usually generated by a larger headsets – like VR – but with a degree of overlay like AR.

MR seeks to overlay of synthetic content on the real world that is anchored to and interacts with the real world such as a surgeon having a fully detailed internal “map” of a patient at the end of their scalpel to help guide an operation. The key characteristic of MR is that the synthetic content and the real-world content are able to react to each other in real time; the MR augments what is real.

MR has bought the term “holographic computing” into the fore, and Microsoft has just announced the HoloLens system which seeks to make MR a staple part of our lives.

In summary, VR is big headsets and pretty dumb, while AR is small, discrete, and offers information right in front of us. MR is somewhere in the middle and is perhaps the future of it all. Time will tell. ●

# HOMWORK STRATEGIES FOR A DIGITAL AGE



I

In an age where teens spend most of their time either playing video games or wasting time on their phones, it may be hard to get your teens to focus on getting their school work done. Most parents today have a hard time getting their teens to sit down and focus their energy on their studies. While teens will argue that homework is a waste of time, studies have proved that well thought out, entertaining homework and studying outside of school truly helps the students to better understand the material, it also helps promote independence. With there being so many pieces of technology that teens would rather waste their time with

than read and study school materials, it has become increasingly important to include today's technology in educational studies.

The digital age we live in now is opening doors for children and teens to learn in ways that wasn't possible 10 years ago. Great tools your teens may already have access to are:

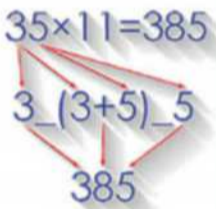
- **Cellphones**, even some of the most basic models have the internet available. This allows students to search nearly anything. Whether they want to admit it or not, the cellphone can be a great learning tool. It is also beneficial to be able to contact your classmates for assignments and just stay in touch with peers. Apps make it all easier than ever before.
- **Laptops and tablets**, these are becoming increasingly popular for schools to loan to their students. This gives

## EDUCATIONAL APPS



### VOCABULARY BUILDER

This app allows you to build your vocabulary while playing a fun game. This app was created by Magoosh's tutors. (Magoosh is an online test prep company.)



### MATH TRICKS

This awesome app teaches mathematical short cuts and tricks to help you master math. Useful for all grades and ages.



### QUIZLET

A free app that literally allows you to study almost anything. Quizlet has tons of categories for your teen to choose from. It offers flashcards, quizzes, writing, and much more. It also allows your teen to create their own flashcards for any subject.

students the ability to research and do their school work on their own personal piece of technology.

The good thing about the digital age we live in, there is so much information available to teens and anyone wanting to learn. There are resources available for students struggling or just needing a little help. Apps are becoming a popular way for people to do anything from checking e-mail to transferring money between accounts. Apps are even becoming popular for learning aids. You can easily learn a different language or the entire human anatomy. Anymore it is very easy to incorporate technology into a teens studies. It is important that teens understand the difference between wasting time playing with technology, and utilizing it to help with studies and everyday life. Teens are way too quick to waste hours on social media, whereas they could be learning something interesting that could be benefiting their future. As

parents raising kids in a digital age, it is vital that they teach them how to properly utilize technology, not abuse it.

It is also extremely important to learn how to manage ones' time and can be helpful for some teens to schedule their study time. Often people find it hard to make themselves "make" time for things such as studying or working out, so it can be helpful to have your teen physically write it into their schedule vs "making" time for it. Basic time management skills are extremely important in everyday life. It is also important that you make sure your teen isn't cramming and pushing to get all of their homework or studying done over the course of a couple hours in one day. Instead, encourage them to study for 20-30 minutes, take a break for a bit and then continue their studies for another 20-30 mins; each day. Helping our teens understand how to make technology and time work for them is just as important is the material they are studying. ●



**Sam Tydeman**

Sam Tydeman is a 30 something mother of two girls and an avid book reader. She has read to both girls every single night since they were babies and this has meant that they are absolute book worms. Her favourite book as a child had to be Pongwiffy, A witch of dirty habits!



**Sunday Simmons**

Sunday Simmons is a freelance writer, indie author and mother of three. She specializes in entertainment writing and music journalism, and has a passion for geeky things – from comics, to movies to anime!

# GEEK PARENTING RECOMMENDS

# BOOKS FOR MAY

BY SAM TYDEMAN

**A**nother month and another list of great book recommendations for you and your little reader to enjoy together. Whether it is a superhero sibling, a story of guilt and secrets or perhaps someone who really loves cake. These are some top reads for you to enjoy together when it comes to story-time.

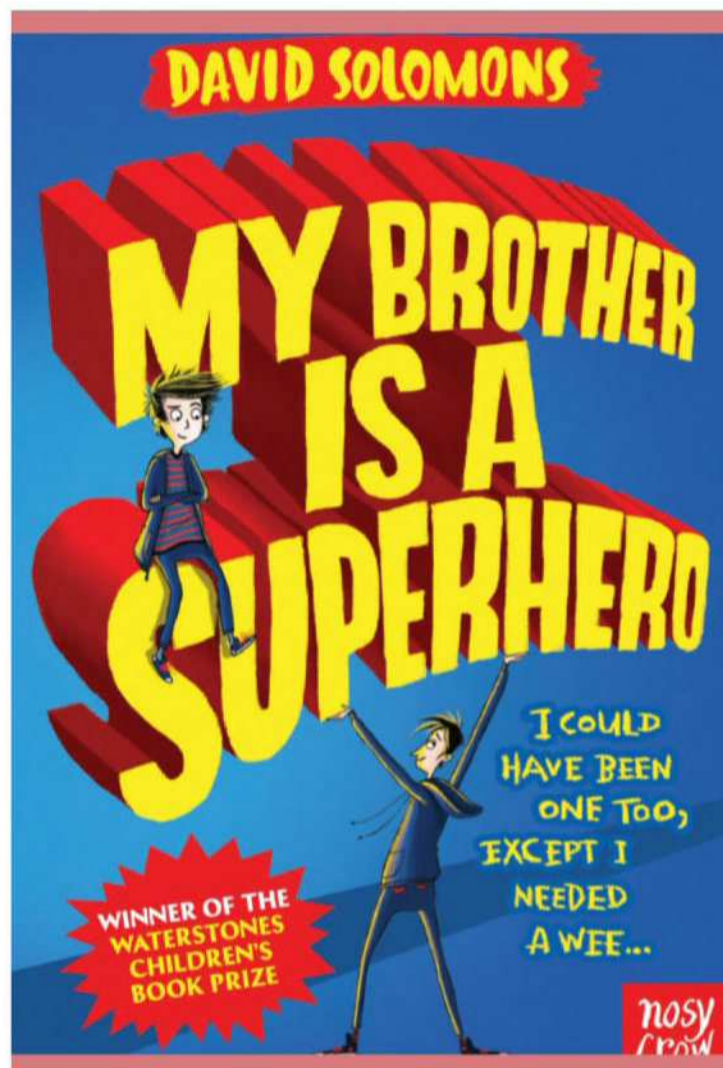


## I Really Want The Cake

By *Simon Philip*

(Preschool)

Imagine you can smell the most amazing cake in the world. Now imagine that you have been told by your mum that you absolutely cannot eat the cake. What would you do? This lovely picture book that is not only packed full of illustrations but also features an easy to read rhyming pattern tells the story of a little girl who has to learn all about resisting temptation and just how hard it is to bear!



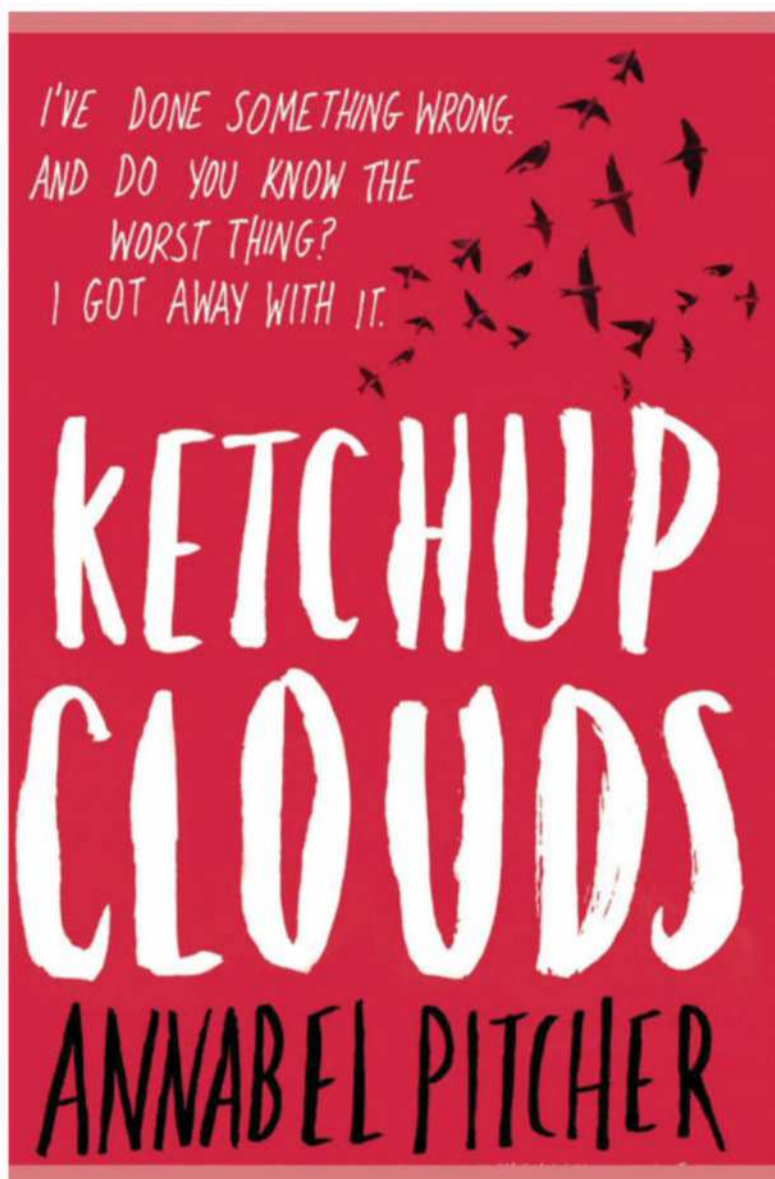
## My Brother Is A Superhero

By *David Solomons*

(Ages 9+)

Who doesn't love the idea of having a superhero sibling? Well, Luke for one. Luke is an 11 year old comic book guru who has to deal with the disappointment of finding out that an alien gives his older brother, who has never read a comic in his life, super hero powers whilst he is in the bathroom. Whilst still a little on the cross side about this, Luke discovers that his brother has been kidnapped and he, along with his friends, only has 5 days to save him!

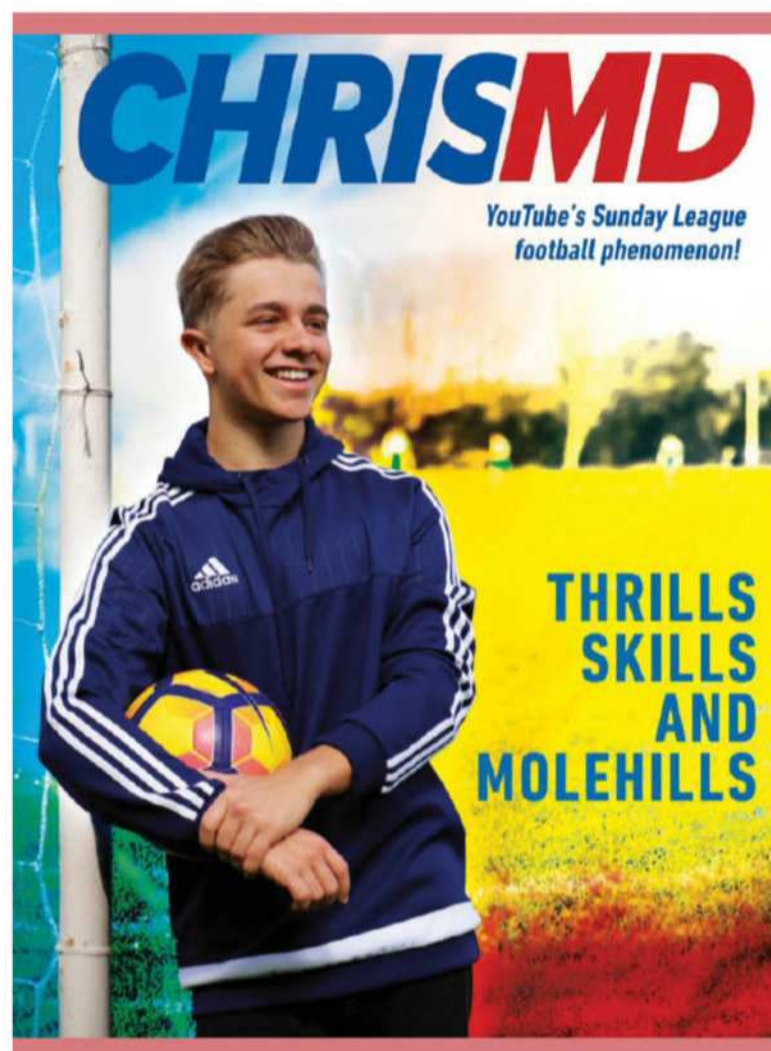




## Ketchup Clouds

By Annabel Pitcher  
(Older Readers)

As your child grows and grows they can start to read books that are a whole lot more dramatic, tragic and exciting. If you want to introduce them to the world of older fiction and give them something to really get their teeth into, then we highly recommend Ketchup Clouds. Telling the story of 15 year old Zoe, it takes a look at how her own guilt at keeping a dark secret and how she decides to share her story with a man on death row in Texas via letters that she sends to him.



## Thrills, Skills and Molehills: The Beautiful Game

By Chris MD  
(Non-fiction book)

Combining the two things that many boys (and girls for that matter) love, this particular book is written by popular YouTube star ChrisMD. Famous for having a Sunday kick-around, filming it and sharing on the video portal, he has transformed everything that he knows about the sometimes less than beautiful game into a book, he passes it onto those who want to learn more about how to ace a kickaround for themselves, including how to try and keep up your fitness levels!

So, what are you waiting for? Why not make this May your chance to dive into some amazing new books for your little bookworm? It doesn't matter what you read, the important thing is to focus on spending some time together and strengthening that bond that only comes from reading and sharing stories with one another.

| Entertainment

# ENTERTAINMENT FOR MAY

BY SUNDAY SIMMONS

**W**hether you got your cartoon fix on Saturday mornings, or after school, the thought of tuning in to your favourite animated characters will likely be some of your fondest memories of childhood. Sharing those classic – and not so classic – cartoon moments with your own kids is a bit of a must in my opinion, so check out some family favourites and relive a little of those simpler times!

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Join us every month for great recommendations both new and old perfect for the geeky family!



### Count Duckula (1988–1993)

Brim full of British humour and brilliantly written characters, Count Duckula is on my list of all-time favourite cartoons. A loose spin-off from Dangermouse, Count Duckula follows the mishaps and mayhem of a vegetarian vampire duck and his motley crew of castle dwellers, Nanny and Igor.

Whilst evil butler Igor tries to turn our veggie loving vampire into a duck shaped Dracula, Nanny spends most of her time trashing the castle with her clumsiness. Oh, and did I mention the castle can appear wherever the Count wants it to? Well now you know.

All in all this is a laugh a minute, slapstick style comedy cartoon suitable for the whole family – and even has a little mild peril thrown in from the ever-lurking vampire hunter Von Goosewing. Brilliant animation from Cosgrove Hall, and with British stalwart actor David Jason voicing Duckula, you just can't go wrong, so watch it today on DVD!



## Muppet Babies (1984–1991)

An animated spin-off from Jim Henson's *The Muppets*, *Muppet Babies* brings some of our best loved Muppet characters to life – in baby form! Kermit, Miss Piggy, Fozzy Bear and co. live together in the nursery, where nanny looks after their every need and their imaginations take them on some splendid adventures.

That's the general gist of the show, but it's far more than that. There's something fun and wholesome about *Muppet Babies* that takes you way, way back to a simpler time and certainly evokes some hazy but happy childhood memories in this fan.

Combining the *Muppet Show* humour with a miniature version of the cast works really well, and the animation style certainly delivers an enjoyable experience. Throw in some stellar musical numbers and it's a recipe for success. Watch *Muppet Babies* on DVD today!



## The Wild Thornberrys (1998-2004)

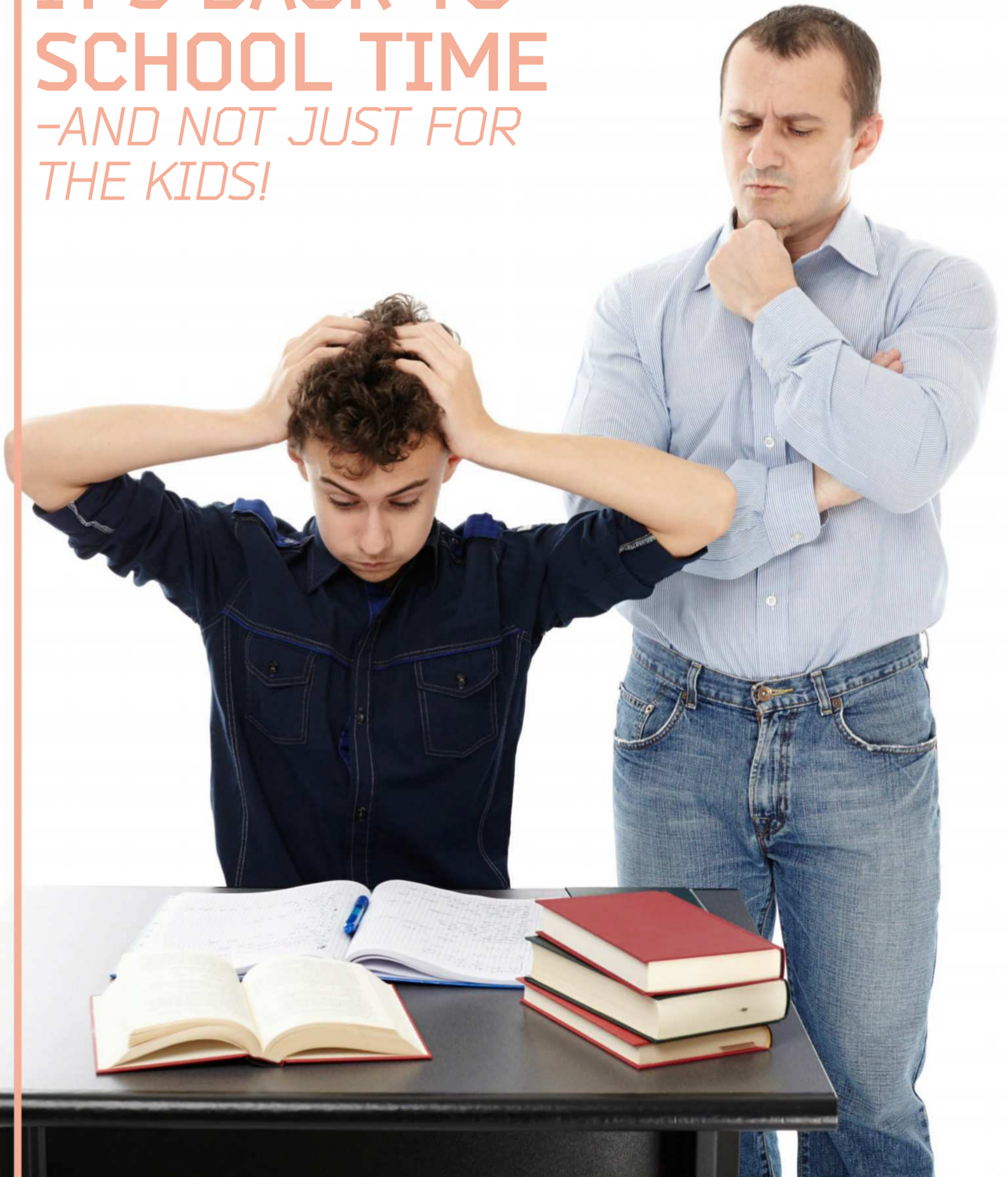
When I hear that a cartoon features Tim Curry as a voice actor, I'm instantly 100% more interested in checking it out, so when The Wild Thornberrys first aired, I was all over it. Luckily for me, when it came to introducing it to my kids, they were equally enthralled.

Following the wildlife adventures of Eliza Thornberry and her nature presenter parents Nigel (Tim Curry) and Marianna, the excitement and comedy comes thick and fast for The Wild Thornberrys as they travel the world in their RV. But Eliza is no ordinary girl, she has the power to talk to animals, which leads her into all kinds of trouble!

With a great supporting cast in the shape of sassy older sister Debbie, and manic adopted brother Donnie (voiced by Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist, Flea), The Wild Thornberrys is a fantastic family friendly animation and you can watch it on DVD, so get on it!

# IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL TIME

*-AND NOT JUST FOR  
THE KIDS!*



## BY Amanda Wright

H

ow many parents, if we're completely honest, would choose to go back to school. Knowing

that the school system has changed so much since the last time we were there, knowing that whether we liked it or not, some of the lessons and work that we'd be asked to do aren't things which we've thought about or done for years!

For many parents it could be a nerve wracking thought, because if you aren't working as a teacher or indeed using all of the things that you learnt in school, then chances are you might have forgotten a thing or two. Mainly because things do indeed change and changes within the education system are no exception. We just have to think about the changes to the curriculum and different terminologies and analogies that our children bring home to understand that!

We don't tend to keep up with these changes because if we're honest

there isn't a real need for us too, unless it is part of our work life. As long as we understand what we learnt, how we learnt it and we can do our jobs now, isn't that all we really need?

Of course, the answer to this is no. It's not just about knowing what we need to know and leaving it at that. Especially when our children come home from school and ask us a thousand questions about their topic of the month or ask the dreaded "can you help me with my homework?" question. For most parents it's a dread, because not only have you not thought about split digraphs since you were 11 but understanding why  $2x + 3 = 9$  is just mind boggling, oh and then you have to share your working out or be docked a point come exam time!

### Being prepared together

As parents we want to be involved in our children's lives. We want to help them in any way which we can and it's a great feeling when you're the

one who has helped them with their homework and put their mind at rest because now they understand a piece of work much better. You also become the person who takes away that feeling of dread for them or that sinking feeling when they walk into the classroom.

Not only this but it's also important for parents to know and understand what our kids are actually doing at school. Understanding the pressures that they're going through so that we can help take some of the pressure off and support them much better.

### Going back to school yourself however...

Taking it to the extreme however is a group of parents from Bolton in the UK who have recently agreed to take part in new programme being aired, called "Class of Mum and Dad" which looks at them going back to school! The six-week long experiment will see the 17 parents, and one grandparent, return to Blackrod Primary School to experience life behind the school gates.

The series follows this group of parents through a term of Year 6 curriculum, studying alongside their children and friends. They will study the same topics, they will take part in sports days, lunch breaks etc and most importantly at the end of their term they will sit an actual SAT exam – the same exams our 11-year-olds must sit nowadays.

The startling reality – of course once you get through the comedy side – is that school for parents can be a scary place!

It not only brings back a lot of memories, good and bad, but it also highlights just how little we do actually know about what goes on behind those school gates.

Getting to grips again with long division, algebra, even practicing writing in script handwriting, or joined up as it's called now.

As the parents' progress through the weeks the experiment clearly shows how expectations soon change and a greater and deeper understanding is giving to just what our kids go through for those 6-7 hours a day.

One of those who is taking part in the show, Bill Bones has recently been reported to saying how shocked he was at the sheer volume of subjects taught for one school year, "Over the course of six weeks we did everything from maths and comprehension to art, geography and dancing. It was jam-packed. I was also surprised by the depth of knowledge expected of the children in our year,

**"...REMEMBER TO NOT PUT UNDUE PRESSURE ON OURSELVES TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING OUR CHILDREN ARE BEING TAUGHT."**



surprised by the depth of knowledge expected of the children in our year, particularly in maths. It was a reminder that whatever the talk about declining standards, I think they are higher than they have ever been.”

The premise of the show and the reason behind it is quite simple, it's to provide us with a greater insight into what our kids have to go through, what is expected on them on a daily basis and for us to use this information and knowledge to help support our kids and help ease some of the pressures.

Of course, it also provides some way to an understanding about why they might be hyper or worn out by the end of the school day as with so many rules and restrictions in school it can be hard for some kids to burn off their excess energy, hence they can come home from school, well, rather wild! Other times because it has been so mentally draining in the classroom it can have the opposite effect. Again, for parents it's about having this awareness, as sometimes all we find out when we ask what our kids have done at school today is “nothing” or “I can't remember!”

### Pressure on both kids and parents come exam time

There's always pressure on kids and parents come exam time. Having a better understanding about what our kids are going through and also being able to help support them better are all things we as parents want to be able to do.

How we would all fair going back to school however and if this is the solution

to a greater understanding, could be another matter.

What's important is our understanding and how we can also improve our own knowledge and understanding. Reinvigorating what we know about these maths and English subjects as well as being able to find and use some great resources to help (Scholastic.com provide some great homework tips and advice for parents, as does the BBC's Schools parents. The US Department for Education also provide some handy hints on getting everyone involved in homework and creating the right setting).

For parents we can often be helping our kids more by simply providing the support with studying and the actual preparing for tests and exams. Yes, if you can help them to understand a complicated math question or provide an answer to a literature theory that's great, but we must also remember to not put undue pressure on ourselves to know and understand everything our children are being taught. Relying on our schools as well as some of the great online resources and tools now available can all help point us in the right direction to answer any conundrum – and it can also stop both parties becoming increasingly stressed!

In terms of the 6-week school term experiment I'm not entirely sure how happy my own children would be if I were to attend their school for a term, but it would be quite interesting to see what goes on and to see how school life has changed. However, I might bypass sitting the SAT exam at the end and just stick to supporting my kids through theirs! ●

# USING THE HEALTH CARD TO JUSTIFY YOUR GAMING HABITS

BY DAVID LAYZELLE

S

ince gaming is a pastime usually associated with a younger generation, justifying getting to

another level or mission in while your partner, dressed and ready to go out, “tuts” and glances at their watch, becomes increasingly hard. However, there is mounting evidence that gaming may have a number of inherent health benefits as we age, and there are some interesting facts that you can use to back it all up.

According to the American-based Entertainment Software Association (ESA), while the largest game-playing section by age are the 18 to 35 year old gamers at 30%, the over fifty’s gamers aren’t far behind at 27%! Other research found that that while only 19% of those aged 51 to 64 years



old, this went up to an astonishing 36% for the over 65's, indicating that retirement from work heralded in plenty of time to more game time.

So, gaming amongst older people is plainly now acceptable, but what are the health benefits of doing it? Well, for all types of computer game, including PC's, Consoles, Handhelds, and Wii devices researchers have found increases in;

- Improved cognitive ability. Tests carried out by North Carolina University found that, compared to a similar control group a cadre of game players aged 60 to 71 showed significant improvement in spatial ability and cognitive focus.
- Increased Social Interaction. The unfamiliar ways that players involved in MMORPG's communicate such as keyboard and VOiP have been found to actually encourage chat amongst an age group that is notoriously antagonistic and belligerent.
- Improved Hand-to-Eye Coordination. The act of using a controller while looking at a TV has been shown to have enormous benefits when it comes to hand to eye coordination and that is something that begins to diminish with age, so any practice that encourages it is to be applauded. The use of computer games has been shown to be particularly useful in helping older people with a physical impairment too as it encourages significant movement.
- Reduce pain and stress. One study suggests that playing games can help reduce feelings of pain that an elderly person experiencing. Games are sufficiently engaging to distract your mind from any pain, and many players have reported a reduction in pain while playing. This may be particularly useful for elderly gamers who may be experiencing problems with a painful condition like osteoarthritis. Playing games can also reduce stress, which is very useful at any age but has been shown to be an added distraction in older gamers.

So, gaming is now a recognised way of not only helping an ageing and increasingly cantankerous population connect with other equally quarrelsome players, but also of helping them forget about their aching joints too.

The ESA report notes that older gamers are changing their gameplay too. Once they preferred to solitude of First Person Shooters and puzzle games, abut are now becoming more involved in online communities such as Second Life or Kitley and that offers a whole new level of potential 'human' interaction to an age group that has felt isolated.

With the array of health issues that it tackles, there's now another reason to play games, as if we needed one! ●



| Level Up

# BIG SCREEN MAGIC

BY CHRIS WHITE



Chris White is a full time geek, father of 4, and self proclaimed Jedi master. An IT Professional by day and a freelance writer by night just doing his part in raising the next generation of geeks.



Every geek has their cathedral. For some, it's a giant

stadium filled with people chanting the home team's name. For others, it's a massive dining table filled with intricate plastic pieces, acrylic paint, and modeling glue. Still, for others, it's a downtown venue with music blaring as the crowd screams "encore." It's in those places that we most feel alive...where we belong.

For me, that cathedral is the cinema. There is ▶

something magical about a movie theater that transcends age or gender or race. Oversized plush chairs, boxes of candy, and over buttered popcorn are just the start. As you get settled in, the house lights begin to dim as a wall-sized screen comes to life right before your eyes. For the next few hours, a person can be transported to an island filled with adventure, a downtown battle between superheroes, or the pilot's chair of a Corellian class freighter. It's truly magic.

As a young man, I began going to the theater on my birthday every year. It has since become a tradition which I have now passed down to my kids. We plan parties for our kids when family and friends can come, but on their birthday dad will let them pick a movie to see in the theater. This has become one of my favorite family traditions, and the kids feel the same way.

I can remember our first daughter. She turned two the weekend that Disney Pixar's film Wall-E was released. She fell in love with Wall-E well

before the movie was out (you can thank dad for that). She had the Wall-E plush and a sippy cup. Then, the day came for the movie. She was dressed in her Wall-E outfit. I can still remember her eyes light up as we walked into the theater. Sitting in that giant chair with a cup of popcorn...she was hooked.

The tradition continues and while the glimmer in her eye might have faded a little, our birthday movie trips are still as exciting as they were that day. It's essential as a parent to share moments like these with your kids. If you are thinking about starting a new tradition, maybe sharing a movie is a good one to try. What matters is that you take the things you love and let them share it with you. In the end, you will end up much closer together than you started.

May kicks off the Summer Movie season, and some great films are coming soon that you may enjoy with your family. Here are few that I would recommend putting on your radar.

# TOP MOVIES TO SEE THIS SUMMER

## AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR

**What You Need to Know:** The last ten years of Marvel films have built to this moment. Join Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, Spider-Man, Black Panther and company as they face down the most significant threat that Earth has ever seen... Thanos. This will be one of the biggest summer blockbusters of all time.

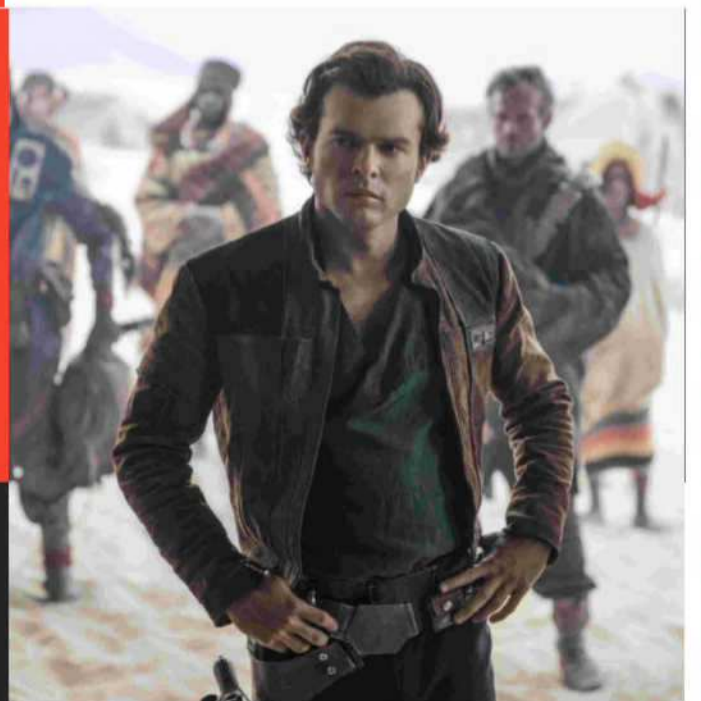
**Who It's For:** As with any Marvel film, there will be intense action scenes, violence, and mild language.



## SOLO: A STAR WARS STORY

**What You Need to Know:** Solo takes us back in time to the origin of everyone's favorite scruffy looking nerf herder, Han Solo. We will see how he meets Chewbacca and how he wins the Millennium Falcon.

**Who It's For:** Star Wars films are usually accessible to a wide age range. There will be some violence and more mature themes to consider.



## THE INCREDIBLES 2

**What You Need to Know:** The Incredibles 2 picks up directly where the first film left off with the family facing down The Underminer. From there, the powers that be decide to bring supers back and ask Elastigirl (Mrs. Incredible) to be the face of the movement. Mr. Incredible is then left to care for the kids at home while Elastigirl helps save the world.

**Who It's For:** Everyone! Specifically kids and parents. The Incredibles is one of the best animated features of all time. It focuses on family values and dynamics is a great reason to enjoy this film as a family.



## JURASSIC WORLD: FALLEN KINGDOM



**What You Need to Know:** Jurassic World has failed, and the island is lost again to the dinosaurs. In Fallen Kingdom, it's revealed that a volcano on the island threatens to kill every remaining dinosaur. It's up to Owen and Claire to venture back to Jurassic World and save what they can.

**Who It's For:** All of the Jurassic movies have been aimed at families, however, due to some very intense and scary scenes might not be suitable for a younger viewer. If the trailers are any indication, Fallen Kingdom will have its share of big scares.

## ANT-MAN AND THE WASP

**What You Need to Know:** Ant-Man and the Wasp is the first Marvel film following Avengers Infinity War and the sequel to the first Ant-Man movie from 2015. In this new film, Scott Lang is back as the Ant-Man and this time he is joined in his adventure by Janet Pym's The Wasp. The pair will go up against a brand new enemy known as The Ghost.

**Who It's For:** As with any Marvel film, there will be intense action scenes, violence, and mild language.





# HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA 3: SUMMER VACATION

**What You Need to Know:** Hotel Transylvania 3: Summer Vacation reunites the monsters as they take a cruise to relax and get some much needed time away from the Hotel. During the cruise, Dracula falls for the ship's Captain who also happens to be a descendant of his sworn enemy, Van Helsing. It's now up to Mavis to keep her dad safe.

**Who It's For:** Hotel Transylvania 1 and 2 were both rated PG so it would be a safe bet that this new film would follow suit. The Hotel Transylvania movies have been clean and very kid friendly with the occasional potty humor moments like loud bodily sounds and similar ilk.



# TEEN TITANS GO! TO THE MOVIES



**What You Need to Know:** Teen Titans Go! To The Movies is based on the wildly popular Teen Titans Go! Cartoon series. In the film, the Titans strive for big-screen stardom in Hollywood.

**Who It's For:** The Cartoon is aimed at a pretty young audience and I would assume the movie would follow the same formula. On the other side, while this movie is accessible to kids, the humor in the series always caters to the adults in the crowd too. If you are on the fence about seeing the movie, check out a few episodes of the show beforehand.

# CHRISTOPHER ROBIN

**What You Need to Know:** Christopher Robin is a live action movie where a grown Christopher Robin reconnects with his childhood friend, Winnie the Pooh, in hopes to rediscover the joy that he once found in the Hundred Acre Wood.

**Who It's For:** The movie is not yet rated but should be suitable for most viewers. It will be more dramatic and slower paced so younger audience members might get restless.



## Peek-a-Zoo

Duck duck Moose, iOS, 2+, Free

### Social Learning

This deceptively simple game is a fantastic tool for helping preschool kids and upwards (as well as those on the autism scale) various different social and emotional cues. Although it is basically one mode and almost too simple, you will soon realise just how much your little one can learn as they play along.

The game presents you with a group of animals, each from a particular letter of the alphabet. From Ajax the Alligator to Zumbi the Zebra, it already reinforces letter association right from the start screen. The actual game itself consists of presenting you with the animals, some doing a particular task or having a particular expression, with accompanying questions such as “Who is surprised?” or “Who is calling?”.

It tests observation and understanding of what is being asked. Can your little one recognise which animal is yawning, or deduct what might be different about an animal who is ‘dressed up’? It could potentially require some patience, and there is potential for a little bit of frustration. Most are generally clear but one in particular - the surprised animal- wasn’t as obvious at first. It is also an app that probably won’t last long but in the short time that it does it will definitely teach and reinforce a fair bit for your little one.

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### VERDICT

A great learning tool, but one with a limited life span.

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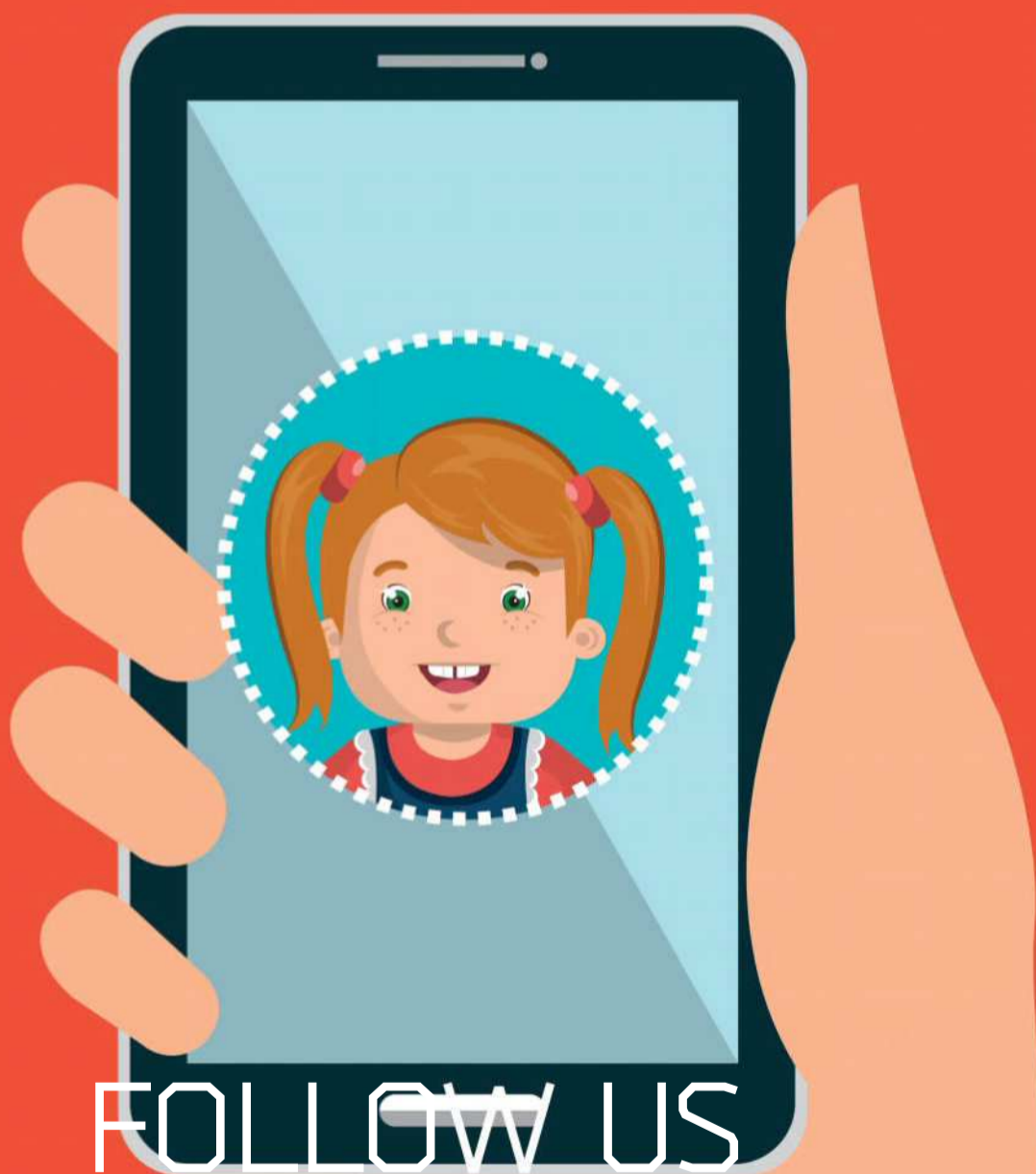
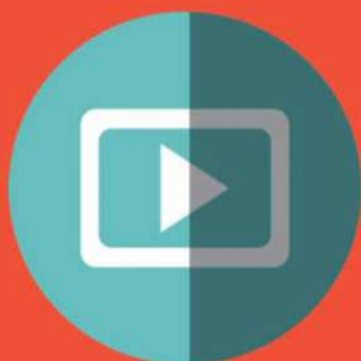


# WE LISTEN!

Did you enjoy this month's issue? Whether it's about one of the articles or anything in general, we're always happy to hear from you!

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