

# Balls, blocks, cars among high-tech toys at CES

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Sifteo wireless game cubes are displayed at the 2011 International Consumer Electronics Show, on January 8, in Las Vegas, Nevada. Sifteo cubes are digital interactive tiles or blocks with full-color screens that respond to motion and to each other wirelessly. CES, the world's largest annual consumer technology tradeshow, ended on Sunday.

Balls, blocks and miniature cars with a high-tech twist were among the toys at the Consumer Electronics Show -- although at prices only adults who are still children at heart may be able to afford.

Among the playthings which attracted attention during the show which ended on Sunday were Mattel's classic Hot Wheels cars, the zippy little metal racers which fly down an orange plastic track at high speeds.

These Hot Wheels, however, are equipped with a video camera on the

front of the car which records their stunts.

The underside of the car features a tiny video screen and the videos can be downloaded to a computer using a USB connection for viewing.

Children who are too old to play on the floor with toy cars anymore can mount them on a helmet or a skateboard and record their exploits for their [Facebook friends](#).

The camera-equipped Hot Wheels will be available in time for Christmas next year and cost 60 dollars.

Another toy -- a finalist for a "Best of CES" award -- is even more high-tech than the new Hot Wheels cars -- a glowing robotic ball that is controlled by an Apple [iPhone](#) or an Android smartphone.

[Sphero](#), as the ball is called, rolls around the floor on command, stopping, starting, turning and navigating around objects.

"The gaming options are endless," said Jim Booth, vice president of business development for Orbotix, the Boulder, Colorado-based firm behind Sphero, which has a light inside and is about the same size as a tennis ball.

"You can get simple driving apps to more complex multi-player games," Booth said. "Office golf -- we've had hundreds of ideas."

Sphero will go on sale in the United States in late 2011 and will cost under 100 dollars -- smartphone not included. Orbotix also plans to open up the Sphero platform to other developers so they can make their own games.

Building blocks have also been reinvented for the digital age by a pair of

former students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the prestigious engineering school located in Boston.

Sifteo cubes feature a color screen and can be combined like dominoes in various ways to play games or solve puzzles and equations.

In one game, for example, the tiles rapidly flash commands to a player who earns points by responding correctly.



A Sphero robotic ball, controlled from an iPhone, is demonstrated at the 2011 International Consumer Electronics Show on January 8, in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Sphero is 74mm in diameter with inductive charging and controlled via bluetooth, and other cool features. CES, the world's largest annual consumer technology trade show, ended on Sunday.

The tiles each have an accelerometer inside and are linked wirelessly to each other and to a computer which houses the game software.

A basic set of the matchbook-sized Sifteo cubes is three blocks. The game goes on sale later this year and will cost 149 dollars.

Mattel has also taken an Internet sensation and made it low-tech -- the addicting Angry Birds videogame from Finland's Rovio which involves catapulting birds at pigs which have stolen their eggs.

A plastic and metal version of Angry Birds, recommended for children over the age of five, will go on sale this year and cost just 15 dollars.

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