

## Gift Guide: Kiddie tech beyond video games, tablets

November 19 2015, byBree Fowler

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This image provided by Tiggly shows Tiggly Words. Tiggly aims to make learning fun by combining toy shapes and letters with apps for iPads or Android tablets. (Tiggly via AP)

What to get a tech-savvy kid who's tired of the same old tablets and video games? New toys this year range from easy-to-use sets for building circuits to a talking dinosaur powered by IBM's Watson artificial-intelligence system.

Most of these come from [startup companies](#), yet they can be found at major retailers or ordered online. All are designed to foster learning and creativity.

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LITTLEBITS (\$200 for Gadgets & Gizmos set, ages 8 and up)

Although circuit-building sets have long been around, LittleBits takes inventing and building electrical-powered devices to a new level. The brightly colored components connect together easily with magnets, then attach to mounting boards like Legos.

It took me about 45 minutes to build a remote-controlled car. The instructions include color pictures of everything I needed to see. I found them easy to follow, and older children should, too. Although I didn't get everything right the first time, I had fun checking my [circuits](#) and solving problems. Kids will as well.

Other projects in my set include a wireless doorbell, motorized fan and rotating lamp.

One drawback: There aren't enough parts to make multiple projects. The kit has two mounting boards, and I needed both to build my car and remote control. Because the boards are needed for most of the projects, you have to take apart what you built to make something else.

To get around that, you'd need to buy expansion packs with extra boards and parts.

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STIKBOT (\$10 for a starter kit, technically for ages 13 and up because of social-media restrictions)

What makes this toy fun is its marriage of apps and social media with old-school stop-motion animation, which stitches together still pictures into a video. It harkens back to the "Gumby" cartoons of days gone by.

The starter kit comes with two StikBots—small, flexible plastic figures with suction cups for hands and feet—along with a basic tripod for your smartphone.

You download a free app and use the StikBots and whatever else you have around the house to create your own stop-motion movie. The movies can then be shared through social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.



This photo provided by littleBits Electronics the BitBot toy. Although circuit-building sets have long been around, LittleBits takes inventing and building electrical-powered devices to a new level. The brightly colored components connect together easily with magnets, then attach to mounting boards like Legos. (Courtesy of littleBits Electronics via AP)

Zing Global Ltd., the company behind StikBot, posts its favorites on YouTube through "The StikBot Show" and gives out cash prizes for the most creative. You can see some of the best at [www.stikbot.toys/videos/](http://www.stikbot.toys/videos/)

The [creativity](#) of StikBot fans is truly amazing. My 6-year-old daughter can't stop watching and has been begging to make her own movie.

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COGNITOYS DINO (\$120, ages 5 and up)

This small, plastic dinosaur from New York-based startup Elemental Path has a voice reminiscent of Yoda from "Star Wars." The toy uses Watson's speech-recognition and cognitive abilities to create an interactive experience.

The Dino will engage in conversations with your child and remember personal details such as his or her name and favorite color. With Watson's help, the toy will also answer complicated questions such as "Why is the sky blue?" and "Where do babies come from?" in a kid-appropriate way. It's not meant for sharing with siblings, though, as Dino will keep track of just one child's favorites.

The toy connects directly to your Wi-Fi home network, so no phone or tablet is needed.

The Dino, which comes in three colors, is sold only online and should ship by the holidays.

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THE INCREDIBLE INTERGALACTIC JOURNEY HOME (\$30, all ages)

Lost My Name, a London-based startup, uses satellite maps and other data to create customized books that go well beyond similar products on the market.



This photo provided by DKC Public Relations shows *The Incredible Intergalactic Journey Home*. *Lost My Name*, a London-based startup, uses satellite maps and other data to create customized books that go well beyond similar products on the market. The beautifully illustrated book tells the story of your child's journey home from outer space. (DKC Public Relations via AP)

The beautifully illustrated book tells the story of your child's journey home from outer space. As your child gets closer to home, the book's pages display nearby landmarks and eventually a satellite map showing your child's neighborhood and home.

Although my daughter already has books personalized with her name and friends, she got a kick out of seeing our home and neighborhood from space.

The books, available in seven languages, are sold only online.

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TIGGLY (\$30 per set, ages vary)



This photo provided by CogniToys shows CogniToys Dino. This small, plastic dinosaur from New York-based startup Elemental Path has a voice reminiscent of Yoda from "Star Wars." The toy uses Watson's speech-recognition and cognitive abilities to create an interactive experience. (Courtesy of CogniToys via AP)

Tiggly aims to make learning fun by combining toy shapes and letters with apps for iPads or Android tablets.

For example, little sea creatures in the Submarine app ask kids to complete words by placing the required vowel letter on the tablet. Use the wrong letter, and a little crab character gives a disapproving look,

while the tablet makes a "boing!" sound. Words completed correctly are sucked up by a little submarine.

The shapes and letters are soft and easy for little hands to pick up and manipulate.



In this Sept. 29, 2015 photo, StikBot figures are displayed next to an iPhone at the TTPM Holiday Showcase in New York. The easy-to-pose figures with suction cup hands and feet can be photographed multiple times and the images stitched together into a film using the StikBot Studio app. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

The set for the youngest kids, ages 2 to 5, focuses on shapes, while another teaches basic math to kids ages 3 to 7. The most advanced teaches early reading skills to 4 to 8-year-olds.



Apps for the tablet feature a variety of games. Most are free, while a few cost \$2 to \$3.

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