

SHOP WINDOW TIME

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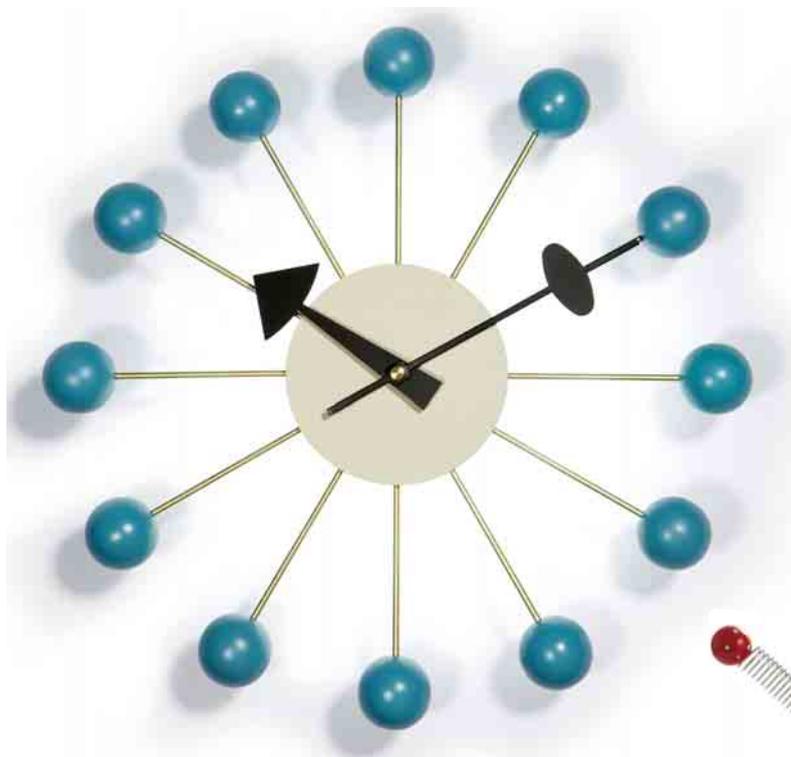
Watch the clock

Help is at hand for parents willing their child to stay in bed a little bit longer in the morning. The Gro-Clock has a glowing screen with images of the sun and stars to help youngsters learn the difference between day and night. The clock has a stars-to-sun countdown, where stars go out as the night passes, until the sun appears, indicating to the child that it is time to get up. It can be used as an alarm clock and it has the option to display a digital clock. It comes with a bedtime story book to help reinforce the message. HK\$475 at [www.babycentral.com.hk](http://www.babycentral.com.hk)



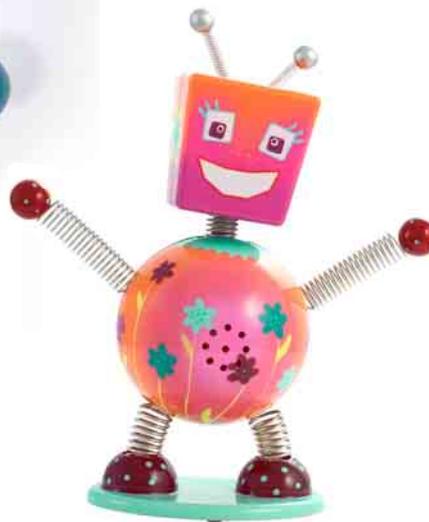
The flip-side of fun

Tic Tac Time, by French toy company Janod, is a fun way to help children learn how to tell the time. Double-sided cards depict scenes on one side that typically happen in a day, with the opposite side showing a clock. Players draw cards and must either tell which scene occurs at that time of the day or set the hands on the clock to the appropriate time. HK\$290 at Petit Bazaar, 80 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, tel: 2528 0229



What comes round, goes around

The ball clock is for grown-ups who like design-orientated pieces with a minimalist edge. Made from wood and with oversized balls acting as the hour-markers, the clock comes in red or blue. HK\$939 at Indigo, shop 107, Level 1, HomeSquare, 138 Sha Tin Rural Committee Road, Sha Tin, tel: 2634 1618



Beat yourself up

This samba timer adds a bit of fun to the timing of household events, whether it's cooking an egg or counting down a time-out session for excitable children. The gadget signals the time is up by humming a samba tune and moving its head. HK\$288 at Pylones, shop 916A, Level 9, Times Square, Causeway Bay, tel: 3426 9542

ROAD TEST DUCK DUCK MOOSE

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It's hard to choose from the plethora of iPhone and iPad apps now available for children. A recommendation on an online forum and a quick Google search revealed that Duck Duck Moose's creations have won a number of awards and are top sellers on iTunes, so I decided to give them a go on my iPad.

*Wheels on the Bus*, one of the company's first offerings, remains a popular choice. It takes your child through the song via screens containing simple interactive elements. My son has never been fond of my own rendition of the tune, but he immediately began bopping his head to the app's jaunty tune. Initially he was distracted until I started poking the interactive elements on the screen, making the windscreen wipers on the bus move or a frog croak. He stayed engaged longer than I expected; I played the app twice. It has the option of recording and playing back the song in your own voice, and playing the song in different languages and with different instruments.

When I downloaded *Fish School*, my

first impression was that the app is for older children. My son astonished me by being fascinated by the fish moving in alphabet shapes while a singsong voice recited the alphabet. Although I had to move the screens forward for him, he was enthralled and shouted when we tried to take it away. One can switch to numbers, colours, shapes or random play. I'm not sure if my son absorbed the educational content, but I assume the

words sink in slowly. For older kids there are games such as "Spot the Odd One Out", so this app will stick around.

My almost two-year-old niece liked *Old MacDonald*, in which one presses different animals to make them perform actions. She went through all the screens and was quite entertained. How long the app holds your child's attention will vary, but often even a 10- or 15-minute break is a godsend.

The recently launched *Peek-a-Zoo*, with simple games involving animals, might be more suitable for older kids. The company also has apps for two- to six-year-olds: *Park Math* (addition, subtraction, patterns), *Word Wagon* (letters, phonics, spelling), *Musical Me!* (music, notes, pitch, rhythm; three years and up) and *Puzzle Pop* (animated puzzles; three years and up).

**Verdict:** Reasonably priced edutainment for the little ones that doesn't grate on parents' nerves. For younger children, be prepared to sit with them and work the interactive elements to get them interested.

**Duck Duck Moose apps, 99 US cents-US\$1.99 for iPhone and iPad**



NEWS

Work out, work better

Children who get more exercise tend to do better in school, whether it comes in break time, physical education classes or getting exercise on the way to school, according to an international study.

The findings, published in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, come as US schools in general cut physical activity time in favour of more test preparation.

Dr Amika Singh, who worked on the study, says the findings show schools should prioritise both academia and exercise.

"Maybe it's an activity break: stand up every half an hour in class and do something," says Singh, from Vrije Universiteit Medical Centre in Amsterdam.

"It might mean going to school by bike, any kind of physical activity. Not just physical education classes."

Researchers reviewed 14 studies comparing physical activity with grades or scores in maths, language, general thinking and memory tests.

Those included 10 "observational studies" in which researchers followed students for between a few months and a few years to track their academic performance.

In four other studies, one group of kids had extra time for physical education classes and other exercises, and their test scores were compared with those of a group who didn't get extra exercise. When researchers asked students how much time they spent exercising, they found that those with more physical activity did better in class.

Three of the four studies involving an exercise intervention had similar results.

In the US, second- and third-year primary school pupils who had an extra 90 minutes of physical activity per week did better at spelling, reading and maths, and gained less weight over the next three years.

Recent research has suggested that many US children are not getting the recommended physical education and breaks endorsed by the American Heart Association: 2½ hours of physical education a week and 20 minutes of break time a day. Reuters

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Week ahead

Today	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Saturday
 <p><b>Tom Lee Music Carnival</b> Channon Liu facilitates a drum circle, 2pm-3.30pm; local bands Will, Sourire, Tens, Roses, Room Torrent and Matchbox perform; 3.30pm-5.30pm, Piazza Area C, HK Cultural Centre, 10 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, free. Inquiries: 2737 7655</p>	<p><b>Hong Kong Baby Products Fair</b> Trade expo of products for babies and infants up to four years of age. Today to Wednesday, 9.30am-6.30pm; Thursday, 9.30am-5pm, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, 1 Expo Drive, Wan Chai, HK\$100, registration is required (go to <a href="http://www.hktdc.com">www.hktdc.com</a>). Inquiries: 1830 668</p>	<p><b>The Tiger Who Came to Tea</b> ABA Productions' KidsFest presentation of a musical theatrical show for the family based on the popular picture book written and illustrated by Judith Kerr about a girl called Sophie, her mother, and a tiger who interrupts their afternoon tea. In English. Today, Thursday, Saturday, Jan 18, 20 and 22 at 5pm; Saturday and Jan 22 at 3pm; Jan 15, 21 at 10am and noon.  HK Academy for Performing Arts, 1 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, HK\$195-HK\$395, HK Ticketing. Inquiries: 2547 7150</p>	<p><b>We're Going on a Bear Hunt</b> Another KidsFest interpretation of a play adapted by Sally Cookson from Michael Rosen's picture book about a brave family's romp through sweeping landscapes in search of a bear. In English. Today, Friday, Jan 15, 19, 25 at 5pm; Saturday, Jan 22, 26 at 10am and noon; Jan 15, 25 at 3pm. HK Academy for Performing Arts, 1 Gloucester Rd, Wan Chai, HK\$195-HK\$395, HK Ticketing. Inquiries: 2547 7150</p>	<p><b>Ballet Classics for Children: Swan Lake</b> HK Ballet performs an educational adaptation of the great work about a prince who falls in love with a princess turned into a swan by an evil sorcerer's curse. Yuri Ng Yue-lit curates, Rick Lau narrates. In Cantonese: today at 2.30pm and 7.30pm; Jan 15 at 5pm. In English: today at 5pm, Jan 15 at noon and 2.30pm. HK Cultural Centre, 10 Salisbury Rd, TST, HK\$120 Urbtx. Inquiries: 2105 9724</p>  <p><b>Exploring Our Wonderful World</b> Alasdair Malloy presents and Luke Dollman conducts the HK Sinfonietta performing works such as Robin McEwan's <i>Banjaxed</i> and Arthur Benjamin's <i>Jamaican Rhumba</i>. Today at 3pm and 7.30pm; Jan 15 at 3pm. HK City Hall, 5 Edinburgh Place, Central, HK\$120-HK\$250, Urbtx. Inquiries: 2836 3336</p>