

This is a picture of my daughter playing Toca Pet Doctor. What can you see?

A child. A tablet. A game. A table. And a dress in the background?

What else?

Focus. Pure and laser like focus. My daughter is about 2 years old. I got Toca Pet Doctor for her today as a treat. My 7 year old laughed at me and said "she will not be able to play that, she doesn't know how".

I smiled.

After loading, the screen showed a pet. She tapped it. The screen switched to a picture of the pet's fur, an open jar and 2 fleas crawling in the fur. She tapped the fur. Nothing happened. She tapped a flea, it moved. She tapped and held a flea, it stuck to her finger. She moved it to the jar, it fell in. She did the same with the second flea and waited. Both fleas jumped out of the jar. She tried again, dragging the fleas to the jar - only this time she closed the lid after she had put them in. Curtains draw and she is congratulated.

In 5 iterations and about 2 minutes she had learned how the game works. You have a simple task and a simple win condition. No instructions, no prompts or tutorials.

This photo was taken later in the day. She had had friends around, so was tired and a bit grumpy. I gave her the tablet. She immediately loaded the Toca Pet Doctor and started a new level. It turned out whilst I had been at work she had played a little and had opened some more levels.

She approached each one the same. Tap around, see what happens and then repeat. Over and over again, failing and restarting until she had finished.

She never got upset or angry. She stayed focused and happy. Concentrating, but enjoying the challenge of the game. She was in [Flow](#). The challenge was matching her skill levels at all times, it was perfectly balanced.

Games are unique in this aspect. They can teach and entertain at the same time, whilst actively engaging the player. The player has to be involved or nothing happens. They encourage you to fail and to try again. In many cases they don't even need to explain what they want you to do, they just let you find out.

In this case my daughter was learning lots of vital skills.

There were motor skills, logical reasoning skills, problem solving, shape recognition, spatial awareness and more. The joy is, she had no idea that this was happening. She was just enjoying playing a game.

Please wait...