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PBS Kids provides fun for preschoolers

With summer vacations rapidly approaching and out-of-town jaunts to exotic locations seeming out of reach, families looking for ways to keep children engaged while staying home can find some help online at PBS Kids. In addition to numerous free online games and activities, which can be found at www.pbskids.org, the site also offers two premium services: PBS Kids Play! and PBS Kids Island, which are well worth checking out.

PBS Kids Play!(5 stars out of 5; for ages 3 to 6; \$9.95 a month or \$79 a year) [..]

PBS Kids Play! provides an online “walled garden” in which to play where, once kids are logged into the service, they can safely and easily move around, switching among favorite characters to explore new activities. The service offers 35 games, most of which can be played on three levels of difficulty. As kids play through the content, characters make recommendations about what they should check out next. The site also has a special parent section that provides these recommendations as well as a summary of the child’s progress. [..]

PBS Kids Island (4 stars out of 5; for ages 2 to 5; free to play)

Developed in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Ready to Learn Partnership, PBS Kids Island is an online destination where kids play sequenced reading games to build an island full of amusement rides.

While PBS Kids Island is free, it requires parents to register an e-mail address and password so that they can create profiles for their preschoolers. With these profiles, the website can save and keep track of the progress of each child.

The site starts with four reading games on a carousel. All games provide voice-over instructions. As kids succeed at these games, more unlock as new amusement park rides are constructed. There are 30 games that cover the literacy skills of rhyming, letter identification, alliteration, phonics, letter sequencing, phonemic awareness, reading and vocabulary. The games feature characters from the PBS Kids television shows Super Why!, WordWorld, Between the Lions and Sesame Street. [..]

