



Top Five Ways to Use the Computer with Your Preschool Grandkid

by Jan Ross, Staff Writer

The first thing my little grandson does when he enters my house is run as fast as he possibly can in my direction, his little sneakered feet thudding on the floor as he throws himself into my arms. When the front door is flung open, I have learned to brace myself for the loving assault. The second thing he does is beg to play on the computer.

After 20 years as a library media specialist in an elementary school, I am very aware of the powerful impact computers can have on education, provided they are used wisely. It's amazing how quickly preschool children can learn to maneuver a computer mouse and master the basic skills of computer use. My grandson and I spend a lot of time playing (and, although he may not realize it, learning) on the computer. Here are some of our favorite things to do.

1. Youtube. Yes, youtube is the site

where you can see things like silly dancing hamsters and the latest wardrobe mishap from Hollywood, but there are also lots of great things for kids on there as well. Search for "kid's songs" or "children's songs" and you will come up with hundreds of great songs. Now search for "kid's stories", "fairy tales" or "folk tales" and sit back as your kid listens, enthralled, to some wonderful stories. Many older kid TV shows are also on there. Just search for "kid TV shows" and it will even give you the option of narrowing down the decade.

2. Microsoft Paint. Free on every PC, this little computer program can keep kids occupied for hours. Help them figure out how to use the different art tools and different colors and then sit back and let them create. They can also copy and paste coloring pages and pictures from other locations into Paint, which gives them an even greater variety.

3. Online Coloring. If they love

With the ability to color, erase and recolor and print out their pictures, your little artists will be very happy.

Just Google "online coloring"

Microsoft Paint, they are going to love coloring online even more. With the ability to color, erase and recolor and print out their pictures, your little artists will be very happy. Just search for "online coloring" in Google or another search engine and you will see a number of sites.

4. Online games. One of the best ways for kids to learn computer skills is by playing online games and there are quite a few sites with a variety of games for different ages. Funschool.com has lots of educational games – just click on "preschool" for games for your little ones. Go to Fisher-Price.com and click on "games and activities" for an assortment of fun online

activities. Nickjr.com and pbskids.org both have games and activities which correlate with their TV shows.

5. Kids as writers. My 5-year old grandson is not quite ready to sit at the computer and compose a novel, but he loves to dictate stories to me and have me type them into the computer. Often, we print them out and illustrate them, then make them into little books. I have also started sending emails to him, courtesy of my daughter's email account! I send him a little note and often have a link to story or song that we enjoyed while he was here. I told him the other day that he needs to start writing me back and he was pretty interested in the idea!

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