



Zombies and pumpkins and ghosts, oh my!

Get in the spirit of Halloween with apps

Halloween is just around the corner, so it's time to load up your mobile device or computer with spooky apps.

A search for Halloween in the App Store turns up over one thousand apps dedicated to the holiday. It's a diverse selection that includes games, puzzles, sound effects, pumpkin decorating, coloring books and more. There are apps for all ages, from the little devils, to the teenage mutants to the old mummies.

Many of the apps are free or just 99 cents. I downloaded a handful of the free apps to try them out.

The city that never dies

Lately it seems that zombies are competing with vampires for the top spot in popular culture. Between "The Walking Dead" television series and the numerous zombie walks and runs, it seems you can't escape from zombies these days.

N.Y. Zombies, from Foursaken Media, is a first-person shooter app for ages 12 and up. You are a survivor in the city that has been overrun with brain-eating zealots. You must shoot, stab, burn and bomb your way to safety, earning cash for weapons along the way. I don't know why money would still have value in a world of zombies, but who am I to argue with the undead?

You kill your way through various locations in the city with different levels of difficulty. The graphics are macabre and bloody. The interface is pretty intuitive. Who knew that killing zombies could be so much fun?

For the little devils

Since Halloween is ostensibly for kids, I looked at a couple of apps designed for preschoolers and those in early elementary school.

Halloween Coloring Book, from Peep Software, is exactly what it sounds like. I believe this company makes similar apps for some of the other holidays. It's a collection of Halloween-themed line drawings that can be colored with virtual crayons. There are several tools to color and erase with, and a wide selection of colors to use. After the pictures are colored they can be saved in a gallery, or shared via email, Facebook and several other methods. The pictures are all appropriate for young kids and the app is as easy to use as a printed coloring book.

Pumpkin Creation, from Libii Inc., allows you to create virtual jack-o-lanterns. There's a selection of eye, nose and mouth shapes, as well as skin colors, scars and ornamentation to choose from. You can also pick different colored lighting for the inside of your pumpkin and different scary backgrounds. Spooky sound effects and eerie music help put you in a Halloween state of mind. When your masterpiece is finished it can be saved in a gallery, or shared via email or Facebook.

Tricky treats

Some of the apps are suitable for trick-or-treaters of all ages. **Halloween Wordsearch**, from Finblade, is rated for age nine and up. It's a classic word search puzzle, where you try to find words from a list that are hidden in a grid of letters. Of course all of the words are creepy and the backgrounds are decorated with pumpkins, full moons and other holiday fare. Scary sound effects alert you when you find a word.

Toppling Towers Halloween, from Big Fish Games Inc., is listed for ages four and up. I think the age range starts too young. The game is a violent war game, though the violence is depicted in a cartoonish fashion.

You use a giant slingshot to hurl boulders or flaming pumpkins at castles manned by mummies and other monsters. You get points for destroying the castles. The occupants scream as they're crushed by flying boulders or collapsing walls.

The game is derivative of the popular Angry Birds. It's one of many apps I've come across that get rebranded for different holidays. It's a simple and fun game to play.

I've barely scratched the surface of all the Halloween apps that are out there. It's a holiday that's all about having fun, and many of the apps can help add to the festive feeling leading up to the big day.

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