

Apple highlights apps to help families cope with autism amid the coronavirus

For Autism Acceptance Day, the company is calling attention to tools that help parents with neurodiverse children.

Coronavirus lockdowns, quarantines and shelter-in-place orders mean many parents are home with their children, which can make maintaining schedules and the normalcy of school hours difficult. For Thursday's Autism Acceptance Day, Apple is highlighting accessibility tips, ways to promote creativity and home education help for parents and families with neurodiverse kids.



Parents with children on the autism spectrum can browse a collection of apps designed to aid in learning, creativity and communication in the Today section of the App Store.

Here are five apps Apple is featuring for Autism Acceptance Day.

Proloquo2Go

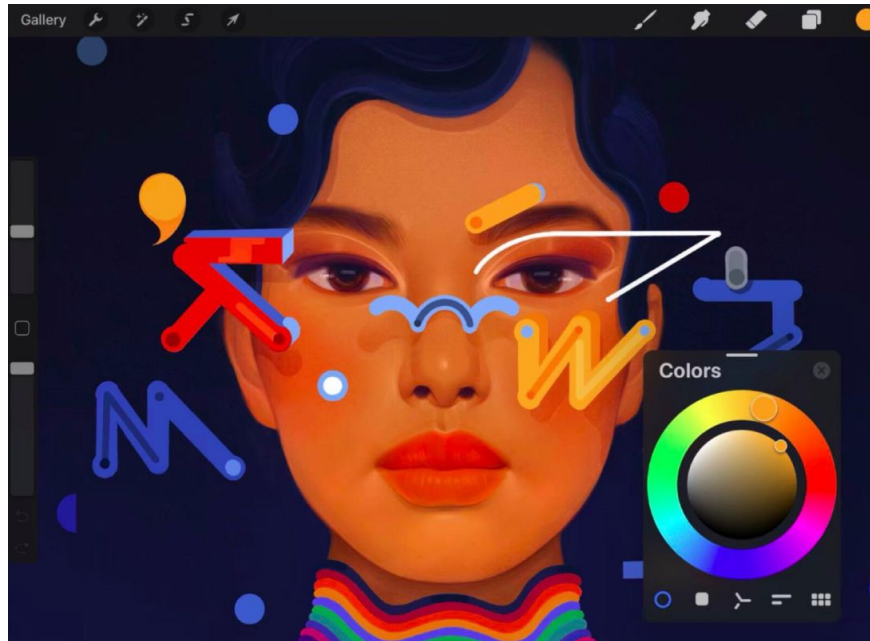


The Proloquo2Go app is designed to help nonverbal users or those who have trouble speaking. The augmentative and alternative communication tool lets children tap on images and words to help them express themselves. The app also supports bilingual communication, so it's easy to swap between languages. Proloquo2Go includes 100 text-to-speech voices supported in multiple languages and children's voices.

Proloquo2Go helps teach and build vocabulary by assigning a symbol to a word. Core words, or those the user would need to access most often, stay in one location. The word buttons are also sorted into grids to encourage motor and visual skills. You can add customized buttons with the app's symbols or use your own photos.

The app works with iPhone, iPad and Apple Watch. Though the app offers a suite of tools, one downside is the \$250 price tag. If Proloquo2Go seems like it would be a good fit for your family, AssistiveWare is offering a discount during Autism Acceptance Month.

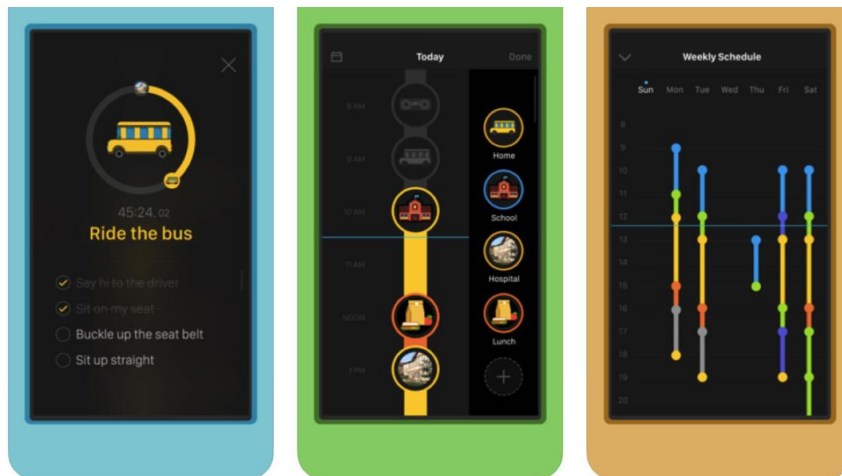
Procreate



Art can be a positive channel of self-expression, imagination, and creativity for those on the autism spectrum, according to a 2017 report from Autism Care Today. In addition, the report said visual arts can make healthy impacts on fine motor skills, visual and spatial discrepancies and cognitions.

The Procreate design app lets users sketch, paint, doodle, animate and create, no matter what their skill level is. It includes hundreds of differently-styled brushes, and a layering system for control over details and composition. The app costs \$10, and works on iPhone and iPad.

Todo Visual Schedule

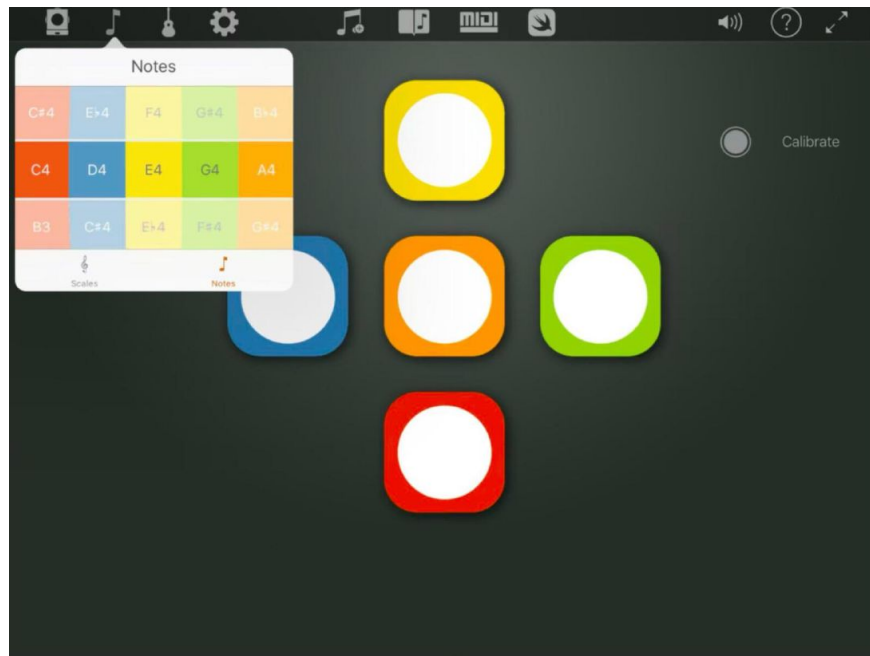


The Todo Visual Schedule app from Enuma is a picture-based planner built to help children and adults with autism or ADHD by translating their daily schedule into easily understandable images.

Todo can help users understand and manage what activity they're engaged in at a given moment, an activity's duration, tasks to complete, when to get ready to start a new task and when a new scheduled activity is about to happen.

The app costs \$13 and is compatible with iPhone and Apple Watch.

Skoog

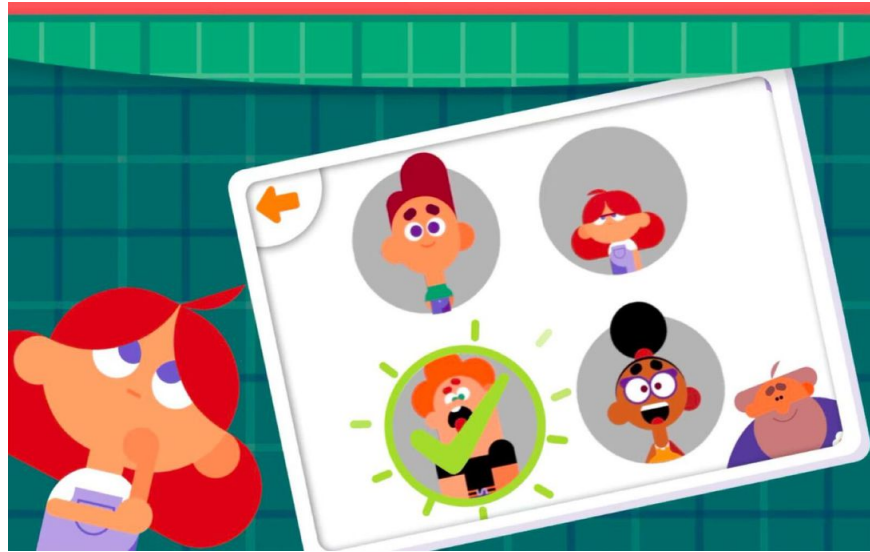


As with art, music can be a beneficial means of self-expression. For children on the autism spectrum, music can be used to help build self-awareness, improve relationships, and encourage communication and interactions with others, according to a report in Nurse Journal.

The Skoog app lets you explore a range of different instruments, explore scales and play along with your favorite songs. The app can sync with your Apple Music library or Spotify premium account.

A potential downside is that the free app requires a Skoog 2.0 device to work. You can order one online from Apple for about \$300. The Skoog 2.0 looks like a square version of a Simon Says game, and serves as a "tactile musical interface." The Skoog 2.0's sensitivity can be adjusted so it can be played by tapping, pressing or squeezing with any part of the body.

Hopster Saturday Club for Kids



The Hopster Saturday Club for Kids is a free app that helps with understanding emotions -- whether it be the child's own emotions or the emotions of others. Hopster uses mini-games to teach children to recognize facial expressions, match feelings to expressions, use emotional vocabulary, understand their own emotions and feel and show empathy to others.

Game features include creating expressions on the Saturday Club characters and the ability to keep track of feelings in an emotions calendar.

The app works with iPhone, iPad and iMessage.

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