

Family apps without another subscription

Six iPhone and iPad apps, chosen around what you want to do - and what you want to pay.

A note from the maker: We make Pixel Pop, included here, and have a commercial interest in it. This is not an independent ranking. We researched the other apps; we have not playtested them for this guide.

Start with the kind of break

Activity / app	US price / purchase model
Khan Academy Kids Stories, reading and math	Free No ads or subscriptions
Pango Build & Explore City Open-ended pretend play	US\$6.99 upfront No ads or in-app purchases
A Good Snowman A puzzle to solve together	US\$5.99 upfront No ads or in-app purchases
Cosmic Express A more demanding logic puzzle	US\$5.99 upfront No ads or in-app purchases
Not Evil Sudoku One daily logic puzzle	Free daily puzzle; US\$4.99 Pro No ads; optional one-time Pro purchase
Pixel Pop - our app Coloring, with a paper option	Free samples; US\$4.99 Unlock Packs No ads; optional one-time unlock

Checked October 3, 2026. US App Store prices and developer descriptions. Prices, features and regional availability can change. Confirm the exact listing before paying. All six listings support iPhone and iPad.

Paid upfront, a free daily activity and an optional permanent unlock are different offers. The next pages explain the fit and the trade-offs.

For younger children and open-ended play

STORIES, READING AND MATH

Khan Academy Kids

Free | iPhone & iPad

No ads or subscriptions | checked October 3, 2026

A broad library of books and learning activities is useful when you want more variety than a single puzzle game.

Who might enjoy it: For younger children; the developer specifies ages 2-8.

Before you choose: It is a learning library, not a quiet single-activity toy. Download the content you want before relying on offline use.

Source: apps.apple.com/us/app/id1378467217

OPEN-ENDED PRETEND PLAY

Pango Build & Explore City

US\$6.99 upfront | iPhone & iPad

No ads or in-app purchases | checked October 3, 2026

Build roads, rails and buildings, then explore the city with its characters. There is no single puzzle solution to chase.

Who might enjoy it: For children who enjoy making up their own stories; developer guidance is 3+.

Before you choose: This recommendation is for this exact standalone app. Other Pango titles or bundles can have different pricing. Its developer also states there are no external links.

Source: apps.apple.com/us/app/id1119104329

Check the edition. A standalone app and a subscription-library edition can share a name. Use the exact listing IDs on these pages.

The age ranges explicitly attributed to developers are their guidance. All other fit suggestions are editorial judgments, not tested age recommendations.

For solving a puzzle together

A PUZZLE TO SOLVE TOGETHER

A Good Snowman

US\$5.99 upfront | iPhone & iPad

No ads or in-app purchases | checked October 3, 2026

Arrange snowballs into snowmen. The small, concrete goal makes it a useful candidate for talking through the next move together.

Who might enjoy it: For patient puzzle solvers or a child and adult taking turns.

Before you choose: The friendly artwork is not a difficulty rating. There is no free trial listed; look at the store screenshots before buying.

Source: apps.apple.com/us/app/id1040930654

A MORE DEMANDING LOGIC PUZZLE

Cosmic Express

US\$5.99 upfront | iPhone & iPad

No ads or in-app purchases | checked October 3, 2026

Plan train routes through space colonies. Choose this for a thinking challenge rather than open-ended drawing or pretend play.

Who might enjoy it: For older children, teens or adults who already enjoy planning puzzles.

Before you choose: The developer explicitly describes it as harder than it looks. It may be a frustrating first puzzle app for a younger child.

Source: apps.apple.com/us/app/id1152474226

Separate age rating from difficulty. A friendly character or low store age rating does not mean the puzzles will be easy.

Try looking through store screenshots together before buying. We have not evaluated accessibility, every in-app screen or offline completeness.

For a daily puzzle or a little color

ONE DAILY LOGIC PUZZLE

Not Evil Sudoku

Free daily puzzle; US\$4.99 Pro | iPhone & iPad

No ads; optional one-time Pro purchase | checked October 3, 2026

The free daily puzzle has your choice of difficulty and unrestricted assists. Pro adds unlimited games, statistics, extra themes and icons.

Who might enjoy it: For readers comfortable with Sudoku rules, including teens and adults.

Before you choose: Free does not mean unlimited new puzzles. Leaderboards and reminders are features to consider if you want a distraction-free routine; the stopwatch can be turned off.

Source: apps.apple.com/us/app/id1614071642

COLORING, WITH A PAPER OPTION

Pixel Pop - our app

Free samples; US\$4.99 Unlock Packs | iPhone & iPad

No ads; optional one-time unlock | checked October 3, 2026

Try a free picture in every pack, then unlock all currently available packs if you want more. Print an outline or numbered grid to continue coloring on paper.

Who might enjoy it: For people who prefer matching colors to solving a logic puzzle.

Before you choose: This is color-by-number, not freehand drawing. Game Center is optional; limited first-party analytics are disclosed in the privacy policy. The purchase supports Apple Family Sharing.

Source: apps.apple.com/us/app/id6757706589

No ads does not mean no data collection. Check privacy labels and settings, and confirm Family Sharing for the specific purchase.

We checked developer descriptions and US pricing; Pixel Pop printing and unlock scope were also checked against its source. This is not a privacy audit or a promise of educational outcomes.

For a deeper Sudoku-only comparison: notevil.io/posts/best-sudoku-apps-for-iphone/ (also written by an app maker).