



## VITALNews

Virginia Initiative for  
Technology and  
Administrative Leadership

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## The Generation Gap

I share a birthday with my 17-year-old nephew. We come from two different generations—he's a Millennial while I bring up the tail-end of the Boomers—yet we have a lot in common. We listen to similar music, we read similar books, and we both have an interest in technology. But it was when I handed him my iPod the other day, I realized that we still come from different worlds.

I should start by saying that I love my iPod. It's filled with music, audio books, and photos. I think it's had a positive effect on my health because I've been going for long walks just so I can listen to the novels or radio programs I downloaded from Audible.

I was planning to buy my nephew an iPod for his birthday. So, I showed him mine. Within seconds, he was playing a game! What? There were actually several games installed on my iPod that I never knew about.

And there's the gap: we both love Bob Dylan,

we've both read Harry Potter, and we both have large parts of *Spinal Tap* memorized, but I did not grow up with computer and video games the way he did. It never occurred to me to even look for a game on my iPod! Yet, he found it within seconds.

This is a gaming generation, and I think it's time for educators to explore this particular technology as a way to better reach the Millennials who are sitting in our classrooms right now. Of course, using the computer for games and simulations is not a new idea, but the improved multimedia capabilities of computers makes them even more compelling, offering the possibility of making history and science come to life. And this generation is already comfortable with the interface, so much so that they navigate complex worlds much better than textbooks.

Want to learn more about games and education? There's a website, of course! It's called [Education Arcade](#) and is a great jumping off point for more information and ideas.

*Happy surfing,  
Karen*

## April is Made for Fools Like Me!

I don't know about you, but I have a tough time concentrating on anything very serious this time of year. The world is a wonderful shade of green, and everyday as I walk through my garden, I am surprised by something new poking above the soil and teased by the flower buds just about to burst. The chickadees have taken over the birdhouse again with six tiny red-speckled eggs. It's Spring!

In honor of this happy season, the rest of the *VITALNews* will be about having fun...on the web. Just a few of my favorite websites that feature games, interactive multimedia and just generally cool stuff. We'll also get you thinking about summer vacation.

Go on...take a few minutes out of your very serious day and just surf. And be sure, on your way home from work, to stop and smell the roses, too! Enjoy!

## Some Music, Maestro!

Most parties have music so let's start by finding something fun.

And, wouldn't it be nice if it were free, too? Fun and free describe the music at the Internet Archive perfectly. I know I have recommended this site before as a great place to find live concert recordings from Little Feat, the Grateful Dead, and even contemporary artists like Jason Mraz.

But on a recent visit, I discovered the archive of 78s! What a walk down memory lane! My grandfather would play his 78s for us, and we would marvel at how much technology had changed. But now, new technology provides access to music that would not otherwise be accessible since few folks even have regular record players anymore much less one that will play 78s. (Come to think of it, I wonder what happened to Pop-Pop's 78s and the player?) Here's the [link](#) that takes you right to the archive. You can download the music for free and listen to it using the media player on your computer.

## Photo Sharing on the Web

Now that there is some great old music playing in the background, you really need to get in the Spring mood. Since most of

you are probably reading this at your desk at work, you can't just get up and leave to go find some flowers. Right? But you can bring flowers right to your desktop. And for that matter anything else that reminds you of Spring. Just visit flickr, a photo sharing website, where users upload their own photos and tag them by assigning keywords. You can then search the database and see thumbnails of all those photos that match your criteria. By clicking a thumbnail, you can view the individual photo or flickr will set up a slide show for you. Very fun! Visit [flickr](#) and do a search on flowers...it will be good for you!

## Games: Educational and Otherwise

Learning can be hard work, but that doesn't mean it can't be fun, too. Not all the games that follow are strictly educational, but lots of them are, so you might even be able to justify playing them at school!

## Orisinal

Some of the most original games I've ever encountered. While they are

not particularly easy, the soothing music and unusual settings make them interesting and potentially addictive.

## Riverdeep

Both educational and fun: that's the best kind of game, right? Riverdeep provides online demos from some of its most popular software. My favorite comes from the Zoombinis software that helps students apply critical thinking skills to situations. The game is called Mudball Wall and the player must figure out the pattern on the wall by shooting colored mudballs onto the various squares of the wall. Of course, there's only so much mud...

Riverdeep also has language arts and math games posted on the site. Many of these games are listed as being appropriate for the primary grades as well.

## Create Your Own

You can play already created games at [this website](#) including several versions of GhostBlasters that tests math knowledge. Or you can use the online interface to create your own. It's free and easy to use.

The games you can create are mostly matching and drag and drop but that's perfect for learning vocabulary or math facts.

Of course, [Quia](#) is the other popular website that allows teachers to create games and quizzes. But Quia does much more including helping teachers make websites and providing access to a huge database of already created games aligned to standards and textbooks.



## Scholastic.com

I'm including this because one of my undergraduate pre-service teachers just raved about it. She used [the tools on the site](#) to create her own website for free. But this is also a perfect place to look for educational games. April is National Poetry Month and there's [a cute rhyming game](#) for pre-schoolers. And don't miss [The Magic Schoolbus website](#) with games, simple

science experiments and more!

## Battleship Anyone?

From the Scientific Computing and Visualization Department at Boston University, online games including versions of some of the classics like Yahtzee and Battleship. You'll need Java for these but they also have non-Java games, too.

## Switchzoo

A classic! Choose different parts of different animals to create your own wacky pet. Students can add titles and stories and print a sheet that gives information about the animals they combined. While it's free online, some options are blocked.

## Lawrence Hall of Science

Great educational games from the science museum at Berkeley. Have fun learning about habitats, solving logic problems, and review acids, neutrals, and bases at the Alien Juice Bar.

## Where Are You Going To Do Over Summer Vacation?

Daydreaming about your summer vacation? Maybe you're thinking about getting away from it all at the beach. Perhaps you prefer browsing through museums, walking across battlefields or celebrating at local festivals. As you know, Virginia has it all from beaches to mountains, museums to battlefields. And, even if you can't get away, you can find it all on the web. The [state's tourism portal](#) is a good starting point. The site includes [panoramic views](#) of a huge selection of Virginia attractions.

How about a virtual visit to the beach? East Coast Surf has links to lots of Virginia Beach and North Carolina webcams. Start [here](#) to check the surf yourself!

Virginia is blessed with the [Chesapeake Bay](#), America's largest estuary. The [Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network](#) is a system of 120 parks, refuges, museums, historic communities and water trails coordinated by the National Park Service.

The 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jamestown is just two years away. You can test your skills as a colonist at the [Jamestown](#)

[2007 website](#). [Virtual Jamestown](#) offers interactive maps and panoramas. [Secrets of the Dead](#), a PBS series, featured Jamestown, and the accompanying website has lots of interactive features related to archaeological finds. Finally, [the Jamestown 1607 website](#) asks the sinister question, "Could you have survived?"

Of course, there's lots more history in Virginia! Don't forget [Colonial Williamsburg](#) and [Yorktown](#) that, along with Jamestown, make up the Historic Triangle.

A little further west, [Monticello](#) sits above Charlottesville. The new [Monticello Explorer](#) makes it seem like you are there with 3D models of the house, narrated tours and an interactive map.

The Civil War also figures prominently in Virginia's history from the Confederate Capital in [Richmond](#) to Lee's Surrender at [Appomattox](#). Don't miss [Petersburg](#), [Fredericksburg](#), and [Manassas](#). And take some time to explore Virginia's [Civil War Trails](#), the system of Civil War driving tours set up throughout the state.

You can see some of the most beautiful scenery in the state from the seat of a bicycle. Virginia has 28 [rail trails](#), multi-purpose trails created from abandoned railway beds. The [Virginia Creeper Trail](#) runs 34 miles from White Top Mountain to Abingdon and crosses over 100 trestle bridges. The trail passes through [Damascus](#), a popular trail town along the [Appalachian Trail](#).

Summer is made for baseball. Luckily, with 8 minor league baseball teams throughout the state along with a host of local teams, finding a game won't be hard. Use [the state's portal](#) to learn more about baseball in Virginia. Or maybe car racing is more your speed? You can find out about [Virginia motorsports](#), too.

In Virginia, summer also means fairs, festivals, and parades. The state maintains [an online calendar](#).

I know I've missed a lot in this whirlwind tour of the Commonwealth, but I hope I at least got you started exploring our wonderful state. Find some time to explore Virginia both virtually and physically!