

Brain training apps as your go-to pastime activity: Here are our top picks

SUMAIYA TASNIM ADIBA

Even a few years ago, brain training apps were not as popular as they are now. With time, we became more conscious of our priorities. It was an awakening in the futuristic era we were stepping into. Brain training, mental exercise, cognitive aptitude - no one is unmindful of these terms anymore. Now in a world where productivity and mental agility are perceived with such grave importance, brain training apps have achieved universal appeal. Apps are also smarter than ever, making users feel smarter where conventional mobile games may fail.

Definitely more beneficial than devoting one's free time to play Candy Crush Saga, here are our top picks of brain training apps for you to choose from:

ELEVATE

Android/iOS

Commended by CNET and Washington Post as "the visionary" in the battle of brain training apps, Elevate is at the top of this list. Though the app is in solid rivalry with other major players of the arena, the engaging in-app features and clean, polished UI give it an upper hand in preserving the dominance.

The app offers a daily series of five minigames, each focused on one of the four types of exercises - writing, speaking, reading and math. Frequent reminders motivate the user not to miss their daily brain sprint. With dozens of different games for each category, the app affirms enhancing cognitive functions, improving memory and sharpening focus. At the first encounter, a short test appears to measure your initial brain 'ability' based on the preferences you want to focus on.

Engaging, fun and enjoyable - this is

how the majority of users have illustrated their experience with Elevate. You will not grow bored of it, as the app firmly claims. With a personalised daily workout routine, performance tracking and rewards, Elevate may really make your brain feel elevated.

PEAK

Android/iOS

A major competitor of Elevate, Peak is another reputed member of the list. Designed in collaboration with academics from Cambridge and NYU, this app promises to train your brain with fun and effective challenges.

Peak offers interactive and fun mental exercises based on the user's chosen criteria for training the brain. With personalized daily workouts, a 'virtual coach', a 'brain map' to track daily progress effectively - this app provides useful daily brain training. As much like other brain training apps, Peak also lets the user choose games as per their personal goals.

More than 45 mini-games are available depending on what the user may be feeling at the moment. Say, you are looking to try something light and relaxing after a long office day. Just play a game from the 'Coffee Break' category and you may not feel so tired anymore! The minimalism and consistency of the interface are almost meditative at times.

LUMOSITY

Android/iOS

If you are more on a serious note about how beneficial regular mental exercises can be for nurturing the brain's potential, Lumosity is perhaps a better fit for you. Features of the games in the app itself are not so different from other major players in the market. Even so, the striking use of symmetry and pop of colours on the app interface reflects a thorough focus on its

intent.

As Lumosity claims, the 'easy-to-learn' brain games are adapted from scientifically validated tasks capable of improving several factors of brain health. Able or not, the daily game streaks sure do feel like a better use of free time than doing a mundane activity.

The games are, however, interactive and fun. You will have to do a 'fit test' at the first Games will be recommended based on the skills you want your brain to be trained for. More than 40 game tasks are accessible at Lumosity. Detailed insights and regular analysis of the user's performance are also on the list.

COGNITO

iOS

Compared to other brain training apps, Cognito is more on the gaming side. Interesting storylines as 'a secret agent on critical missions' makes the core purposes of improving memory, attention, focus and improving analytical skills a fun pastime.

The app can also be integrated with Apple's Health app to send vital insights into the user's brain coordination.

Memory games, logic puzzles, word games and more variations are on tap which, as the app affirms, are designed by real neuroscientists. Cognito assesses the user's personality traits based on their performance and personalised insights are provided for added value to these games.

From experiencing new challenges at each try of these games, you may feel more productive throughout the day and confident about whatever task is at hand. This is how most brain training apps are more special than usual gaming applications.

MINDPAL

Android/iOS

MindPal is lightheaded and simple in structure as a brain training app. If you are looking for something enjoyable instead of playing the same crossword game over and over again, you may want to give it a try. Based on the user's preference on what aspect of the brain's capability to improve, MindPal creates a personalized plan, suggests to the user what game to play and provides an in-depth analysis of regular performance.

Along with a personal daily program that adjusts over time to reach optimal results, MindPal now lets its users create an account for tracking their daily experiences. The award-winning training app offers over 35 interactive activities to train 7 cognitive functions: memory, attention, language, math, etc. Once you start using the app, timely notifications will remind you of your daily challenge so you feel the urge to be productive even at recess and don't lose track midway.

Brain training games have been with us for a long time. From solving crossword puzzles in daily newspapers to random word games, brain training is always an enjoyable activity. Nowadays, the experience is digital and more versatile with intriguing variations. Because of the short time interval for solving each game, you will look forward to playing them each day!

