

EVIL DETENTIONS



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Evil detentions, the iPhone App, has been released into the iTunes store for November 2010. Building on the hugely successful website, www.evildetentions.com, it offers youth workers, teachers and trainers a huge array of creative, innovative and above all... 'Evil' practical tasks within a fantastic user interface. There are onscreen cards for each task, and these have ratings out of 10 for categories such as Time Required, Difficulty and Evilness. They also have helpful instructions on the back, along with audio commentaries on making the tasks even more 'evil'. The app, available for 59p and also in a cut down free 'lite' version, lets you zoom into cards from 'hands' of your favourite tasks, zoom in and flip them over with a swipe of your finger. Cards can be listed by any category or rating and there's even a random card picker for those times when you cannot decide between the 30+ cards included.

Evil detentions started 6 years ago with a UK teacher, AJ Booker. One day he got fed up with setting lines and other traditional detentions and decided to set something a bit different. Two students had been throwing bits of paper round the room so AJ Booker gave them a sheet of paper and a glue stick each and told them to tear it into strips and stick them together. After fifteen minutes the students with the longest strip got to leave early and the other had to rip that long strip up again and stick it back onto a piece of paper. The students called this an 'evil' detention, local (UK) slang meaning 'well chosen' as the task set was linked to the offence, and thus evil detentions were born. The website launched a few months later with various tasks in 6 graded categories from '5 minute' all the way up to 'Dr Evil' and was instantly enormously popular. Now 5 years and millions of hits later, the iPhone App version is here.

When asked why Evil Detentions was launched, AJ Booker said "Traditional tasks are supposed to be a deterrent but often they put up a learning barrier between Student and Teacher. After the detention they will still need to communicate effectively but the learning relationship will have been damaged. Evil Detentions are focussed on setting something tricky, but interesting. The tasks build problem solving, creativity and lateral thinking skills to give busy educationalists an armoury of ideas. They have proved so popular that many users worldwide treat them as motivating and group activity tasks to build up skills, not as punishments."

The Evil Detentions website has been viewed by millions of people worldwide since its launch and has been a favourite with teachers from the start... In fact, many new ideas have been suggested by teachers but most have had to be rejected. AJ Booker commented: "Evil Detentions have to be useful, and not actually evil. Many rejected suggestions by users of the site have included ideas which would get a teacher sacked on the spot, or at least severely reprimanded. Evil Detentions treads a fine line, but always we ensure that revenge is not the motive, cruelty is not an option. Some of the rejected ones I list on our Twitter posts."

The iPhone app, which also works on the IPAD and newer IPod Touch, gives you a set of 30 categorised cards, each with a rating for Creativity, Difficulty, Equipment, Time, Effort and Evilness. It has the look of a real deck of cards. Working with Screwtape Ltd, a very experienced programming company, the app has been polished so everything works effectively. On the full version it is possible to tap the categories and ratings which then lists all the cards by that choice, something which takes a long time with a set of real cards. AJ Booker and Screwtape Ltd have a couple of other uses for this unique card user interface and will be launching new information products during 2011, as well as test marketing an Android version.

We were curious as to why the cards had Information on the back of them, as well as audio tracks. AJ Booker told us, "We wanted to really pack the app with value. A simple set of cards would have communicated the essence of the task, but not the many ways in which you could use it, that's where the text on the back of each card comes in. Similarly, the audio tracks give context to each task, explaining how to best use it and why it is a particular rating. Quite a few include the origins of tasks as well. We think that Apps nowadays have to try that little bit harder to be noticed and perceived as good value now the App Store is so well established."

Reaction to the App by testers has been fantastic with almost everybody shown the Beta versions wanting to immediately download it. AJ Booker commented, "We have put out the LITE and Full versions because we want everybody to try it. The Lite version gives you 20 cards, but only some with info text on the back and audio tracks, it gives you a good idea of how great the full App is. We know from website feedback that Evil detention tasks are used by Adult Trainers, Youth Group Leaders, Scouts and many others as well as teachers and though the \$1 version (59p in the UK) has so much more, you can try the free version for a bit of fun"

So where next for Evil Detentions? We asked AJ Booker: "Evil Detentions as an Iphone App will be updated every 3 months with another 6 new cards for at least a year. We are hoping to license the logo and tasks for consumer products like mugs for teachers, odd but satisfying T-Shirts and perhaps return to selling real cardboard Evil Detention cards, 700 sets of which are still in my loft!"

So has the harassed teacher a new weapon in their punishment arsenal? Only time will tell, but at least with an Iphone full of Evil Detentions, they'll be fully equipped for anything.

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