

Vortex robot wants to join kids for play and programming

July 10 2015, by Nancy Owano



You can't argue with doting parents. From yesterday's huggable teddy bears to fingerprint sets to today's cute spaceman robots, they easily conclude there is always room for one more toy. This time around, a robot called Vortex is the tempting offer, and the makers have turned to Kickstarter to generate funds.

The Vortex is for children; it is a smart and responsive robot that kids can play with and program. Using the Vortex and apps, kids can play

different games, and learn about robotics.

The promotional video said that programmable Vortex is compatible with both Android and iOS devices.

DeveloperTech said kids can program Vortex through simple drag-and-drop modules in a visually engaging [workspace](#).

Vortex comes from a company founded in 2008, DFRobot. The Shanghai-based company's focus is on developing robotics and open source hardware for the maker community.

Vortex, said Simon Crisp in *Gizmag*, is "a friendly Arduino-based [bot](#)."

It runs around on four AA-sized batteries and it can go for 40 to 90 minutes, finding its way around obstacles, detecting lines, and talking.

The idea is to combine the app with a Vortex robot with onboard Bluetooth 4.0 (BLE), to program the robot with different combinations. You take the robot out of the box and pair it to an iOS or Android phone via Bluetooth.

Vortex can begin teaching kids how the [robot](#) functions through four built-in games, said Ryan Daws in *DeveloperTech*. He summarized the components that make up this project. [Hardware](#) specs include; Bluetooth 4.0, USB, I2C, a six LED on top, a six LED on the bottom, a speaker, ground sensor, proximity sensor, and 'Eye Display' with different expressions. Vortex can be expanded with other sensors, he said, for temperature, sound, accelerometer, gyroscope, ultrasonic, touch sensor, and more via the I2C socket.

Four pre-installed games are Bumping Fight (this is where two or more robots compete in a head-to-head match following rules of traditional

sumo matches); Virtual Golf; Driving (this features continuously expanding tracks, four tuned Vortex racers, and props); and Robot Soccer, a game that can be played with two or more players.

Vortex is open source, compatible with Arduino and Scratch. "It can see and speak by using infrared, grayscale and sound speakers," said the Kickstarter page.



The team's goal is \$54,035. At the time of this writing, they raised \$16,111 with 34 days to go. Prices and packages vary. For about \$69, supporters can order a Vortex Single Pack, which gets one Vortex with sticker set and golf set. Estimated delivery is in October. For about \$255, there are four Vortex on offer with one standard gaming map, one

mega map, sticker set and golf set. Estimated delivery is also October.



More information: www.kickstarter.com/projects/1...otic-toy-re-invented

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