



TOY-SHAPED GAMES CONTROLLERS CONNECT VIRTUAL CHARACTERS

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Devices such as the Nintendo Wii and [Leap Motion](#)'s gesture control for notebooks have demonstrated that there is a whole world beyond the standard controllers for games consoles and computers. Aiming to engage young gamers with the world of physical objects, [ZowPow](#) is a new startup that uses plush toys to control corresponding virtual characters in a range of kids games.

For its first release — the iOS-based [Tiny Plane](#) — players need to guide an airplane through a constantly-scrolling maze of missiles and power-ups by moving the plane up and down. Rather than a standard controller, the game comes with a plush toy version of the plane and its canine pilot that can be connected wirelessly to their devices. Using the accelerometer inside, the on screen character can be controlled with the toy — when the child holds the toy high in the air, the virtual character will also rise. When not used for the game, the toy can simply be used as any other plush toy.

The game is USD 0.99 to download, while the toy controller costs USD 24.99, and the company is also set to release its second title and toy — called [Redford](#) — in the near future. The controllers help children to connect the characters on-screen with a physical object, which is both entertaining for young players and also helps to develop their ability to empathize. Are there other ways to connect the virtual and physical worlds for children?

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