

# Children's Videos: Not Just Kid Stuff

Digital culture embraces movies, TV, games, music, virtual reality and online viral hits. The blurring of the lines, the proliferating remixes and the cross-platform references don't faze today's digital-native kids.

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Children's videos are evolving quickly and now offer more and better educational opportunities than in earlier years. Technology makes all this possible, but the choices are myriad and sometimes confusing. A channel lineup that enables parents of young children to choose suitable video fare for them will help keep this customer segment happy.

Videos can help educate an entire household. Here are a few that impressed me as good examples of how to get and hold viewer attention. They also provide examples of the cross-fertilization among digital media – movies, TV, games and online video and music. Today's children, as digital natives, move easily among all these media.

Let's take a look at a recent theatrical release, Steven Spielberg's blockbuster "Ready Player One." I was happy that my 8- and 9-year-old, all-boy focus group wanted to check it out. My gang of five devoured what looked to be a ton of popcorn and assorted traditional snacks.

Spielberg brings grown-up approval and exploration to a cinema form that is often dismissed and misunderstood. He asks us to love it or hate it, deem it pandering or mocking, serious or not serious enough.

The year is 2045, just after the "bandwidth riots." An orphaned teenager, Wade, lives with his Aunt Alice in the Stacks, a grim area of perilously piled-up trailer homes. We never get to see what happened pre-2045 or how these overloaded virtual reality survivors really live. At one point, we see pizzas being delivered by drone.

## CROSS-PLATFORM DRONE PIZZA DELIVERY

This isn't so far-fetched as it seems. In March, HBO actually delivered pizza by drone to "Silicon Valley" fans in three metro areas in a direct reference to the first episode of the HBO series' fifth season. See [hbo.com](http://hbo.com) and its drone delivery partners [fooji.com](http://fooji.com) and [dronedudes.com](http://dronedudes.com) for additional details. Don't miss the delivery video!

In the HBO stunt, lucky fans ordered pizza by tweeting #Sliceline with a pizza emoji and received a whole pie free. Only 20 pies were allowed to be delivered by drone in each metro area, and FAA regulations and safety issues around Trump Tower precluded New York City deliveries.

In "Ready Player One," Wade wants to escape from his life of oppression and enter "Oasis," an intricate virtual reality game that no one has ever completed. The film's audience cheers for Wade to win (spoiler alert). When Wade's avatar, Parzival, charges forward on his mission, there is a car race with hundreds of avatars virtually flying down highways and across bridges in their virtual race cars. Parzival drives a DeLorean just like the one Michael J. Fox drove in the 1985 film "Back to the Future" – a nice bit of nostalgia aimed at the adults in the audience.

Other subplots are embedded with pop culture icons and artifacts. My favorite was a nod to Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film, "The Shining." Scary stuff in a different dimension. This film is rated PG-13.

## BEEP BEEP I'M A SHEEP

Our next New World of Video choice is "Beep Beep I'm A Sheep." This catchy title refers to a line in a song from a popular YouTube video by asdfmovie that first appeared on the blog of its creator, Thomas Ridgewell. The video and song became instant hits in a remix version that used the beat from "Uptown Funk," by Bruno Mars and Mark Ronson.

The stick-figured, animated version is popular across a range of age groups, from young children through adult viewers. The video has a cute, simple dance, easy-to-read graphics and, most important, a compelling beat.

This video has evolved quickly, with major additions such as the Mars-Ronson commercial-looking version. The contrast of the original with the viral versions, plus imitations, is amazing. This change and growth is welcome, and each new contribution can be measured without having to declare one of them a winner. Though the number of parodies is growing, the original beat remains a favorite. ❖

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