

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22

Today

MEET THE DEVELOPER

Making Kids' Games Meaningful

Read how Toca Life's creators fill their worlds with wonder.

PRO TIP

Apps for Traveling Parents



GAME OF THE DAY

Animal Crossing: Pocket Camp

Build your dream campsite.



Toca Life: Office
Turn work into an adventure!



Today



Games



Apps



1 Updates



Search

MEET THE DEVELOPER

Making Kids' Games Meaningful



Read how Toca Life's creators fill their worlds with wonder.

Since the series debuted three years ago, *Toca Life* has given kids amazing worlds to explore. Whether it's a bustling farm or a science classroom, these environments are more than virtual playgrounds—they're places where children can create their own stories, uncover secrets, and express themselves.

Petter Karlsson, a play designer at developer Toca Boca, leads creative design for the series. He spoke to us about the essential elements of a virtual home, the surprising things that kids find funny, and tackling a delicate subject like death.



Designers at Toca Boca's Stockholm office. The company has released more than 30 apps since 2011.

What was the early vision for the *Toca Life* games?

Originally we thought kids would play different characters—they'd pack their bags and travel. What we found, though, is that they like to play their *everyday* life, so we've given them a way to tell whatever story they want, whether it's about eating breakfast, going to school, or love.

When crafting these hyperdetailed environments, what features are essential?

If we build a house, we want to have light and windows so you can change between day and night. Also, kids really like to throw things away—especially when they toss something they shouldn't and can turn that into a story. Making sure we have enough trash cans is actually one of my top priorities.



The developers felt the airplane and beach in *Toca Life: Vacation* would be settings kids could relate to.

***Toca Life* games have featured characters of all races. Some have vitiligo or are in wheelchairs. Does diversity play a big role?**

Absolutely. We don't want any kids to feel excluded. We want them to feel like they fit in, like they can see themselves and their family in these worlds. I love how hard we strive for that.

Tell us about *Toca Life: School*.

As with all our games, it's about giving the kids control—especially in an environment with so many written and unwritten rules about how to behave. Getting to be the teacher and do the smallest things they know they're not supposed to do—it's really fun.



What happens when kids rule the classroom? Hand them *Toca Life: School* and find out.

***Toca Life: Hospital* has a baby ward and X-ray machines—but also a hospice room. How did you decide to address a delicate subject like dying?**

We thought, “Wouldn’t it be amazing if we could cover life all the way through death, and also make sure you could say goodbye to loved ones, especially for kids who have lost someone?” We had all these questions. Can we kill characters? Can they become ghosts?

Eventually, we decided to have characters simply go to sleep without making snoring sounds like they do elsewhere. Some kids *want* to play about the loss of someone, so we built a simple room where you can light candles and dress up nice. It’s not horrible in any way. Like every location, it’s all about what the kids put into it.



Giving children a place to say goodbye was the goal of this special room in *Toca Life: Hospital*.

***Toca Life: Stable* goes deep on a very specific subject: horses.**

Yeah, it was exciting to dig into something that was a big part of my mom's life when she was young. For her and for the kids who start doing chores at a stable when they're 6 years old, I knew we had to do this right. Grooming is really important to horse lovers, so we have special brushes and equipment. We tried to fit in all the clothing and saddles. Being able to go that deep was also necessary to do the subject justice.



From prize ribbons to horse droppings, the details in *Toca Life: Stable* had to be just right.

What is the role of playtesting in the creation of these games?

You might think an idea works, but until you've tested it with kids, you don't know. Take the secret lab in the basement of *Toca Life: Hospital*—I had to confirm that kids would actually touch the machine you use to access the room. With the food-combining machine in *Toca Life: Farm*, we had to do *a lot* of testing to make it understandable.

And sometimes you don't realize what kids will find funny. With the hotel elevator in *Toca Life: Vacation*, only from testing did I learn how hilarious kids found putting way too many people inside at once.



Playtesting sessions help the creators see through kids' eyes.

What's your favorite thing about making these games?

It's corny, but I almost get tears in my eyes answering this: It's the joy of the kids, both when we're playtesting and hearing great feedback. Whether you're a boy in the Netherlands or a girl in Saudi Arabia, you're enjoying the same thing the team put so much effort into.



Toca Life: Office

Turn work into an adventure!



Toca Life: School

Education

OPEN



Toca Life: Hospital

Education

OPEN



Toca Life: Stable

Education

OPEN



Kids who want to play grown-up will find zillions of fun possibilities in *Toca Life: Office*.

Take a desk job in a high-tech building. Serve as judge in a courtroom. Or keep an eye on the little ones at a day care center.

In this virtual playground of real-life workplaces, there are cute characters to dress up and cool objects to fiddle with. (Check out the chopper parked outside that fancy workplace!)



Working printers, hidden floor panels, superhero costumes—each room has lots to discover.

Like other *Toca Life* titles, *Office* offers a rich world with much to explore. Inside the bank, for example, you'll find ATMs, cameras, alarm buttons, a radio, a vault, and other gadgets that children would love to get their hands on.

The developers couldn't resist adding goofy references for older players too, like the stapler suspended in Jell-O at the office or a poster concealing a gaping hole in the jail cell.



That pilot's helmet looks adorable on every character. Especially the baby!

Be sure to seek out the cleverly hidden secrets inside the bank and beneath the wooden office desk. As with the rest of *Toca Life: Office*, they reward curious children and adults alike.



Toca Life: Office

Turn work into an adventure!

