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BUZBY: Breakin' All The Rules

Spring 2006 Software

Ages: 3 - 6 yrs.

Publisher: [Digital Praise, Inc.](#)

Home Use Price: \$29.95

Platform: windows

Review:

This warm and entertaining game is the latest of two new titles in the Hermie & Friends series that are part of a new video-gaming niche trend where the underlying theme of interactive adventures includes Christian values, morality lessons and religious beliefs. Based on a Christian kids' video, "Buzby the Misbehaving Bee," the game stars two likeable plump caterpillars, Hermie and Wormie, who need help searching the graphically colorful and vivid 3-D grounds for lost flower seeds to plant their flower garden. Along the way, the game seems almost like any other video game for this age group—though more laid-back, almost subdued. But there's another difference. A big one. Before setting off on their search, Hermie and Wormie pray.

"Hermie, maybe we should ask for God's guidance . . .," suggests Wormie.

God's gentle and kindly *basso profundo* replies from the sky telling them he'll give them a hand on their seed hunt. Instead of an uncomfortable religious experience, the game designers keep the conversation with God friendly, simple and sweet—a fascinating little I'm-always-with-you scene that isn't over-done.

So with God their invisible and silent co-pilot, the worms take on five activities where lessons, both academic and Christian, underlie the fun. And there is fun.

First, at Schneider's Ferris Wheel, the worms show up to find a chaotic crowd of caterpillars hollering to be first in line. Hermie and Wormie tell them their bad behavior reminds them of Buzby, the Elvis-impersonator bee, who used to break all the rules before he changed and was forgiven. Players then identify clues as to which order the caterpillar pairs should climb aboard the quaint little Ferris wheel.

Whether adding up scores at the Bug Bowling alley, helping the ladybug Lucy match pairs of numbered flowers, sorting foods into categories with Iggy and Ziggy's Roach Coach, or spelling words from Buzby's honeycomb word puzzles, the other activities are always on the message about the value of following rules, respecting others, etc., without being preachy about it. The basic principle of edu-tainment software has always been to sneak the learning into the fun—and because there's no law separating church and software, that's the principle here as well.

After each activity, players can go back to the flower garden and plant the seeds they've earned. The flowers grow instantaneously—like a miracle, dare we say? Click on the sunflower any time and it opens a simple little coloring activity.

The publisher, the Fremont, CA-based Digital Praise, has a motto: "Glorify God Through Interactive Media." But there isn't a sermon in the subtext exactly, and overall this family-friendly game stacks up with some of the best edu-tainment games for this age on the market—which for some parents is an answered prayer.

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Don Oldenburg is a feature writer and consumer columnist at *The WashingtonPost*; and coauthor of "The Washington DC-Baltimore Dog Lovers Companion" (*Avalon Travel*).

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