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## Review

### *Flo: Return of the Water Beetles* / *Buzby: Breakin' All the Rules*

**Developer:** [Digital Praise](#)  
**Publisher:** [Digital Praise](#)  
**Genre:** Children/Educational/Adventure  
**Release Date:** November 2005  
**Platform:**  



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 March 21, 2006



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## Introduction

Having reviewed all Digital Praise games offered to Just Adventure thus far, I was remarking to a colleague just the other day that if this keeps up, I could find myself in permanent regression to early childhood. Not that such a thing would necessarily be bad, you understand-- but I've been having so much fun with these games, I'm beginning to wonder!

Here we have not one, but two new titles: *Flo: Return of the Water Beetles*, and *Buzby: Breakin' All the Rules*. Based on Max Lucado's *Hermie & Friends* video



presentations, both games are geared toward ages 3-6. (I was going to say goo-goo-gaa-gaa at this point, but decided it would sound too silly.)



More than a million *Hermie & Friends* videos have been sold since their introduction in 2003. Inspirational author Max Lucado, the creative force behind these videos, also has over 40 million books in print. The excellence of these products has definitely carried over into **Flo** and **Buzby**.

With each of these games, Digital Praise has continued its fine tradition of presenting faith-based themes within a framework of entertaining, family-friendly activities. Both games emphasize important moral concepts and reinforce early

development skills.

Additionally, they both feature Hermie and Wormie, who are caterpillars; and their friends Lucy Ladybug, Buzby Bee, and Schneider Snail. Each game goes on to boast its own unique characters, as well.

**Flo** and **Buzby** have further aspects in common. The games both start in Hermie and Wormie's garden, where links to all activities are located. Each activity employs an auto-leveling feature, which increases or decreases difficulty according to an individual player's skills. This way, kids aren't frustrated by activities that may be too difficult, or bored by ones that are too easy.



All screens afford access to each game's Options Menu (including a User's Manual), and all cutscenes can be viewed again an unlimited number of times after they've been accessed once from within the game. Also, if players want to leave an activity and come back later, they can do so without saving the game. The software keeps track of players' progress and remembers where they were. Each game can accommodate multiple players by having everyone sign in with a different screen name.

When activities are successfully completed, our caterpillars are rewarded with seeds for their garden. These can be planted at any time and produce different results in each game, which I'll be discussing in greater detail a little later.



At times during the two games, Hermie and Wormie feel the need for a bit of guidance -- so they decide to have little chats with God. (I frequently do this myself, although the responses I get aren't anywhere as direct as the ones Hermie and Wormie get!)

Something that really impresses me about these chats is that our pair doesn't try to negotiate, make deals, or tell God what to do, nor does God threaten, give ultimatums, or tell them what to do. It's more along the lines of Hermie and Wormie saying what's on their minds, and God making suggestions, offering gentle nudges, and providing reassurance. I really, really like this approach. I'm also impressed by the fact that our pair remembers to be grateful and say "thank you."

And now, without further ado, let's have a look at each game individually.

### **Flo: Return of the Water Beetles**

As our story begins, we find Hermie and Wormie discussing a garden they want to plant. In flies a breathless Flo, who excitedly tells them she's received a message from Stringo of the Water Beetles (the others are Bingo, Lingo and Zingo!). The group is coming to town to give a concert, and they want Flo to set everything up. She asks the two caterpillars for help.



This news is of some concern to Hermie and Wormie, because it seems that Flo and the truth haven't always been on the best of terms. In the not-so-distant past, in fact, Flo had told everyone she was good friends with the Water Beetles when she hadn't known them

at all, and she ended up getting caught in a lie. But Hermie points out that Flo hasn't told any lies since then and seems to have learned her lesson. So the caterpillars agree to give her a hand.



Flo tells our duo that theater decorations are needed and food must be prepared for an after-concert party. Hermie and Wormie decide to ask their friends to help out, and after Flo flies ahead to spread the word, the caterpillars follow along to make sure things proceed according to plan.

Concert preparations are represented by five of **Flo's** activities. These can be done in any order.

In Antonio's Seed Zapper, party streamers are assembled by Antonio Ant and his troops using seeds Hermie blasts out of the air with a Super Seed Zapper. Being a military type, Antonio refers to this activity as "securing camouflage for the musical maneuvers."



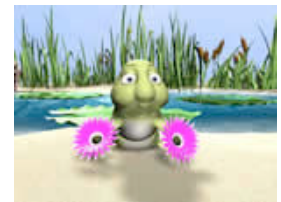
Lucy's Cookie Maker has our two caterpillars decorating cookies that Lucy Ladybug has made. Lucy's twins, Hailey and Bailey, gather toppings that Hermie and Wormie place on the cookies in proper order following the pictures in Lucy's new Sarah Leech Cookie Book.



With help from Webster Spider, Hermie constructs bridges made of lily pads and logs in order to gather flowers that are floating in Webster's Stream. As Hermie's skills improve, he's given an additional challenge of avoiding being tongue-lashed by frogs. (A hit from a frog does no permanent damage; it just knocks Hermie back a step).

In Buzby's Meadow, the two caterpillars stand ready to catch pairs of matching flowers gathered by Buzby Bee (yes, the same Buzby who's in the title of **Breakin' All the Rules**) as he tries to avoid the meadow's hornets. As with Webster's frogs, the hornets do no permanent damage -- they just cause Buzby to drop any flowers he may be carrying, after which he can pick them up again.

Lastly, Hermie and Wormie try out Schneider Snail's Pea Pattern Sorter. Peas bearing geometric shapes are gathered in the same order as they're reflected in patterns provided by Schneider. During this activity, Schneider makes some pretty amusing remarks ("Peas be with you, Hermie").



When all five activities have been completed, we're treated to the Water Beetles in action as Hermie and Wormie nibble on some of the delicious food everyone has helped to prepare. The game doesn't end here, however.



A sixth activity in **Flo** takes place back at the garden. As it turns out, this is a Musical Garden. The seeds Hermie and Wormie collect as they work their way through the game's other activities are either song or instrument seeds. As they're planted, they grow into sheet music for eight children's and Christian songs, and eight musical instruments with which to play them.

By clicking on different instruments, players can toggle them on and off as well as select which one will take the lead. This enables players to create their very own concerts. Instruments are good for around 15 minutes of playing time, after which they wilt and disappear. But Hermie and Wormie can replace them by revisiting activities and collecting more seeds, making this part of the game open-ended.

In **Flo**, the concepts of truthfulness, trust, forgiveness, and gratitude are explored. The game's activities are also conducive to the development of early critical thinking skills, with emphasis on pattern recognition, matching, sorting, sequencing and creative exploration, along with eye-hand coordination. On top of that, **Flo** is just plain fun!



### Final Grade: A

[\(find out more about our grading system\)](#)

## ***Buzby: Breakin' All the Rules***

This game illustrates what can happen when rules are not followed. The beginning of our story finds Hermie standing in the garden, holding a seed in each hand and shaking his head. Wormie stops by and asks what's wrong.

As it turns out, Hermie had ordered some seeds to be delivered "flymail," but whoever packed them ignored the safety rules and the bags ripped open, retaining only the two seeds Hermie is holding. The rest of them have been scattered all over the place. (I daresay we're all familiar with this kind of substandard customer service incident!)



After talking things over with God and being reassured, the two caterpillars go about finding the lost seeds with some help from their friends, and by engaging in five different activities.



First up, we have Schneider's Ferris Wheel, where a bunch of caterpillars are waiting in line. Schneider is having a bit of a problem, because everyone wants to be first to go on the ride. Hermie and Wormie decide to tell them about Buzby, whom everyone knows only as a hard-working, rule-abiding bee.

Our pair explains that it wasn't always like that, and when Buzby first arrived, he had thought he was above the rules of the garden and had refused to follow any of them, declaring himself to be the King of the Bees. In order to stay, though, he had to change -- and that's just what he did.

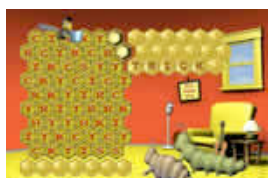
By the way, Buzby is an Elvis-type bug musician. You might say he's an Elvis Wanna-Bee (I'm so funny).

Anyway, it's agreed that the rules of the Ferris Wheel will be followed, with Hermie placing pairs of caterpillars in the ride's seats according to color combinations called out by Schneider. Those not chosen leave peaceably.



After all seats are filled and the Ferris Wheel rotates, each caterpillar turns into a butterfly and flies away. Then a new group of caterpillars shows up and the process is repeated. Following the rules makes everyone's experience a lot more enjoyable.

The next activity, Bowling Bugs, is an absolute riot. Hermie and Wormie curl up into balls and hurl themselves down a bowling lane at pinecone pins, which also happen to be walking around. According to Wormie, you "just aim for where you think most of 'em will be." Players then help count and add the caterpillars' scores. This thing is so silly -- and I mean that in the very best sense of the word -- that I spent an embarrassing amount of time playing it. I found it utterly charming.



When Iggy and Ziggy's Roach Coach is first selected, some food flies into the picture and smacks our two caterpillars on the head (Hermie asks Wormie: "Is it raining?"). This prompts the pair to visit Iggy and Ziggy, who are throwing various edible items from their coach and have created an untidy bunch of clutter. They tell the caterpillars that their favorite ingredients are all mixed up and ask for help sorting things out.

This is accomplished by Iggy and Ziggy tossing stuff to Hermie and Wormie, who catch certain items in large cans and let others fall, to be sorted later. The caterpillars also inform Iggy and Ziggy of the Garden Golden Rules, particularly Number Seven: "Don't Make a Mess."

Next, we have Lucy's Meadow, where Lucy explains that she'd collected some flowers to use in Hailey and Bailey's next math lesson, but the twins disregarded the rules and left the flowers out all night. As a result, all of the flowers were devoured by Night Critters, and now Lucy has to gather more of them.

Hermie and Wormie again recall Buzby's transformation from rule-breaker to rule-follower, and tell Lucy that they're sure the twins will learn their lesson as well. The caterpillars go on to help Lucy collect more flowers. This activity closely resembles Buzby's Meadow in *Flo* and is accomplished the same way.



The fifth activity is called Buzby's Hive Sweet Hive. Hermie and Wormie reminisce with Buzby about his previously wayward behavior, and this is accompanied by a scene showing a mischievous Buzby flinging acorns at anthills and their inhabitants. But Buzby says a lot has happened since then, and he's become a "new bee." Hermie and Wormie then agree to help Buzby arrange "honey letters" in his honeycomb to form words of two-to-five letters.



In *Buzby*, the seeds Hermie and Wormie collect are planted in an Art Garden, where they grow into paintbrush flowers in eight different colors, and eight drawings that can be colored onscreen. The drawings can be re-colored an infinite number of times, making this the same kind of open-ended activity as offered by *Flo*'s Musical Garden. As colors are used up, Hermie and Wormie can replenish them by replaying activities and acquiring more seeds.

*Breakin' All the Rules* emphasizes the benefits of following rules and the consequences of disregarding them, along with respect for others and the value of prayer. The game's activities reinforce early learning skills in counting and addition, letter recognition and spelling, and sorting; they also offer practice in hand-eye coordination. And, as with *Flo*, this is all a great amount of fun!



### Final Grade: A

[\(find out more about our grading system\)](#)

### In Conclusion...

Both *Flo* and *Buzby* installed and ran flawlessly on my computer. In both games, the bright colors and smooth animation are a treat, the sound effects are wonderful, the music is downright catchy, and the voice acting is spot-on. Even though I'm not a little kid, I thoroughly enjoyed both of these games. The stories and dialog are so clever that they kept a smile on my face and had me laughing out loud in spots.

I must admit, though, that I'm starting to have a little problem writing reviews of games from Digital Praise. I feel I have a pretty decent vocabulary, but I seem to be running out of superlatives. I mean, how many ways can one say "This is great!"?

As far as I'm concerned, both *Flo* and *Buzby* are ideal for young kids. They're tremendously entertaining and deliver important lessons with generous dashes of gentle humor. What a great way to introduce small children to spiritual and moral concepts as well as basic practical skills, all in a non-threatening way. I flat-out love these two games, folks. I just can't recommend them enough!

## **System Requirements:**

### **Windows**

- Windows® XP, ME, 2000, 98
- 300 MHz Pentium® II
- 100 MB available hard drive space
- 64 MB RAM
- 8X CD-ROM drive
- 4 MB DirectX® 9.0b compatible video card
- DirectSound® 9.0 compatible sound card
- Speakers

### **MAC**

- G3, G4, or G5
  - MAC OS X v10.0 or later
  - 100 MB available hard drive space
  - 128 MB RAM
  - CD-ROM drive
  - 4 MB video memory
  - Speakers
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