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Lightbot: Code Hour

Liz Kazandzhy

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App Review

**App Name:** Lightbot: Code Hour  
**Developer:** Lightbot  
**Reviewer:** Liz Kazandzhy  
**Version/Update:** 1.1.5  
**Category:** Games  
**Platforms Available:** Apple, Android  
**Device Used:** Samsung Galaxy On5  
**Interest Level:** Preschool, Primary, Intermediate, Young Adult  
**Rating:** Outstanding

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**Review**

Lightbot: Code Hour is a relatively short app that is designed to introduce kids to coding. Users are expected to solve 20 puzzles—8 in the Basics section, 6 in Procedures, and 6 in Loops—that get progressively more difficult. Each level presents a set of square panels with a robot character placed on one of them. On the right is a “main” section in which you write the code for the robot to run using the following buttons: up (move forward one), lightbulb (light the blue tile), left (rotate left), right (rotate right), and jump (jump either up or down if there is a change of elevation). The purpose of the puzzle is to have the robot light all the blue tiles. After writing the code, you can play it back to see the result; if the objective was reached, you unlock the next level, but if not, you must continue to edit the code until it works. The Procedural section adds the concept of classes, with main being able to “call” other sets of code, and the Loops section adds the concept of repeating code.

The biggest downside to this game is that it’s so fun that you’ll want it to extend far past just 20 levels! (A longer version is available for $2.99.) Overall it is a fantastic problem-solving game that simply explains and uses programming principles. The nature of the puzzles requires children to think ahead, imagine and realize desired outcomes, and find and fix mistakes. The instructions are so clear, and the concepts so simply presented, that even young children would find it interesting and doable (though they may require adult collaboration to get started or solve especially difficult levels), and it’s just as entertaining for older children and adults. The graphics are aesthetically pleasing and the robotic music and cute robotic character add a nice touch. Also, the app is available in an impressive 28 languages which can be chosen from the main menu. This outstanding program can be used in the classroom and at home to teach programming basics and encourage fun problem-solving.