



BETTER
KID CARE
PROGRAM



Family Time Work Time

A B A L A N C I N G A C T

Building Strong Families

Play

Play and learning go hand in hand. Adults are mistaken if they think children are just having fun and using up energy while they play. Children learn every minute they are playing. Think about it. The more your child plays, the more he learns!



The Right Kind of Toys

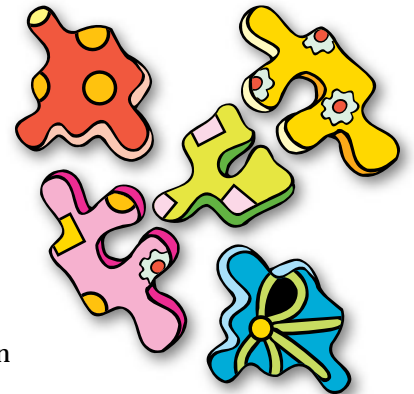
Here are some guidelines for good toys:

- Can your child use the toy in more than one way?
- Can your child decide how to play with the toy or does it play for him?
- Is the toy right for the age of your child?
- Will children of other ages be able to use this toy?
- Can the toy be used with other toys for playing?
- Avoid toys that could cause stress or create tension for your child or you.

Great Toys for Kids

The best toys are those that let children decide how to use them. Here are some examples:

- Dramatic play toys include blocks, toy vehicles, dolls, stuffed animals, dress-up clothes, toy animals, tool sets, medical kits, doll houses, puppets, and props to make stores, kitchens, restaurants, etc.
- Small object play builds small muscles in hands and fingers. Toys for this include construction sets, puzzles, small blocks, and stringing beads.
- For art play provide a variety of art materials for your child. These include paints, crayons, washable markers, paint brushes, paper of all sizes and colors, safety scissors, glue, clay, and play dough.
- Physical play helps children build arm and leg muscles. These toys include bikes and other riding toys, balls, jump ropes, swing sets, things to climb on, and tunnels to crawl through.
- Game playing teaches children about taking turns, following rules, and solving problems. These include board games, card games, and games you or the children make up.



Safe Toys

Choose safe toys when buying toys for your child. Here are some toy safety guidelines:

- The toy is made of sturdy material that will hold up.
- Avoid toys that shoot or throw things that might hurt your child's eyes or make loud noises that could harm hearing.
- Labels on painted toys should state "nontoxic."
- The toy should be easy to wash and keep clean.
- Make sure the toy works well.
- Young children often put things in their mouths, so small parts on toys can be a choking hazard. Any toy or part of a toy that is small enough to drop through a toilet paper tube should not be given to children under three years of age.



Some Toys to Avoid

Avoid toys that play for the child, such as those that talk, sing, or dance when a button is pushed; toys that teach violence such as war toys, action figures from violent television shows, balls made to look like bombs, or toys from horror shows or movies; toys linked to television programs, movies, music, and video games for teens and adults; toys linked to advertising candy or unhealthy foods.

Make Your Own Toys

There have been many toy recalls lately. Think about making some toys for your child. Choose safe materials to make them and you can be sure your child's toys are safe!

Homemade blocks - Blocks can be made from boxes of various sizes. You can also use clean cardboard milk containers by cutting off the tops and putting the open ends inside each other. Use duct tape to secure them. These make sturdy blocks. For variety, use round snack containers for cylinder shapes. There are tall ones and shorter ones. You can cover homemade blocks with newspaper, construction paper, colored contact paper, or leave them plain. If you cover them with paper, secure the paper with tape.

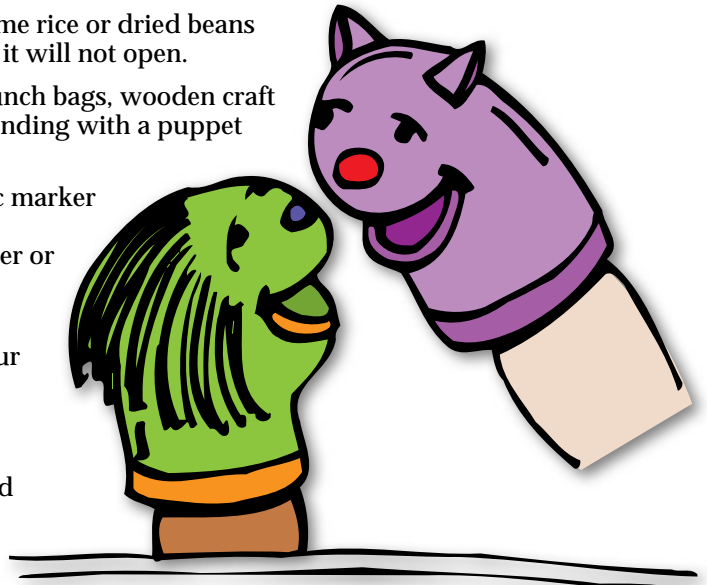
Shakers - Use empty water bottles to make shakers. Put some rice or dried beans inside the bottle. Hot glue the lid to the bottle to make sure it will not open.

Puppets - Puppets can be made from paper plates, paper lunch bags, wooden craft sticks, or socks. Young children can have hours of fun pretending with a puppet friend.

Puzzles - Cut the front side off a cereal box. Use a non-toxic marker to draw different sized interlocking shapes. Cut these out. Glue them to a piece of cardboard to make them sturdier or cover with clear contact paper.

Sock bags - Children love to throw things. Instead of using bean bags, roll up a pair of socks to make a sock bag for your child to throw into a basket or a box.

Bowling game - Save empty water bottles and use them as bowling pins. Have your child line them up on the floor and arrange them in rows for bowling. Give your child a ball to roll to knock down the pins.



Pre-K Counts in Pennsylvania


Parents in Pennsylvania need to be aware that the PA Pre-K Counts programs offer free half-day and full-day quality pre-kindergarten programs throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Pre-K Counts is a state initiative administered by the PA Department of Education that provides 11,000 three- and four-year-old children throughout the state a high quality early learning experience. Criteria for enrollment include family income levels (300% of the federal poverty level or a family of four earning \$61,500), language (English is not the first language), and cultural or special needs issues.

You may be eligible to apply. For a complete list of programs offering the Pre-K Counts programs in Pennsylvania, go to the PA Department of Education Web site at www.pde.state.pa.us and click on the Pre K-12 section. From the list on the left side of the Web page, click on Early Childhood and then click on Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts on the left side.

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