



Choosing Toys Children Really Like

We often hear about the demand for one toy during the holiday shopping season. A few years ago there was a rush on a stuffed animal, like one kids saw on TV. The news reported on parents standing in store lines for hours or fighting other parents to make sure their child would have one of these toys on Christmas morning. Sad to say, after all this effort, many parents found their child playing with this toy for a few minutes, then putting it aside to play with something else.

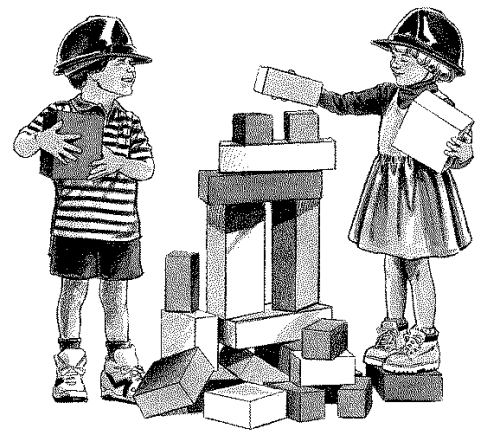
There are lots of toys on store shelves to choose from and the cost can really add up. Children often want every toy they see in the store and on TV. It's up to adults to choose the best toys for the money they have to spend. How do you choose good toys that children will really like to play with?



**THINK ABOUT SAFETY
AND HOW CHILDREN
WOULD USE A TOY
BEFORE YOU BUY IT.**

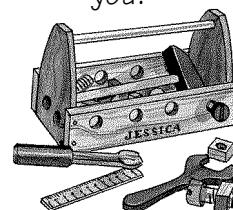
Before you buy a new toy, ask yourself the following questions about safety:

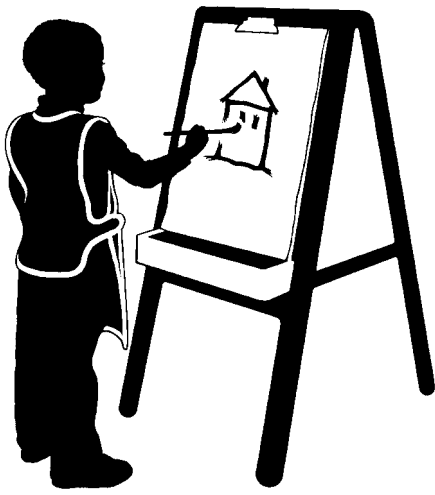
- Is the toy made of sturdy material that will hold up with lots of playing?
- Does the toy shoot or throw things that may hurt a child's eyes?
- Does the toy make loud noises that may harm a child's hearing?
- Does the label on a painted toy state "nontoxic"?
- Is the toy easy to wash and keep clean?
- Does the toy work well?



Then look at the toy and think about how children would use it:

- Can children use this toy in more than one way?
- Can children decide how to play with this toy, or does it play for them?
- Is the toy right for the age of the child?
- Will children of other ages be able to use this toy?
- Can the toy be used with other toys for playing?
- Is there anything about this toy that could raise tension or cause stress for the children or you?





GREAT TOY CHOICES FOR CHILDREN

You can't go wrong by choosing toys in the groups listed below.

Dramatic play — toys that help children work out their ideas about the world.

These include blocks, toy cars, trucks, planes, boats, dress-up clothes, ocean, farm, and rainforest animals, insects, dolls, stuffed animals, tool sets, medical kits, doll houses, puppets, props to make a restaurant, store, post office, etc.

Small object play — toys for children (three years of age and older) to use the small muscles in their hands and fingers. Playing with small objects helps children's learning about math and science. These include construction sets, blocks, plastic blocks that fit together, puzzles.

CAUTION: Children under three years of age should not play with small objects, which they may put in their mouths, causing them to choke. Any toy that is small enough to drop through a

THE BEST TOYS LET CHILDREN DECIDE HOW TO PLAY WITH THEM.

toilet paper tube should not be given to children under three years of age.

Art play — materials for children to use in ways they choose.

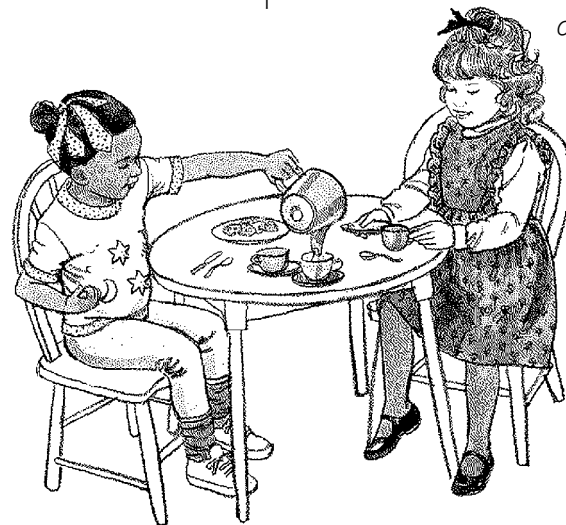
These include paints, paper of all sizes and colors, crayons, markers, children's safety scissors, glue, clay.

Physical play — helps children use their arm and leg muscles.

These toys include bikes and other riding toys, balls, bats, jumpropes, swing sets, things to climb on, or tunnels to crawl through.

Game playing — teaches children about taking turns, following rules, solving problems.

These toys include board games, card games, and games you or the children make up.



TOYS TO AVOID

Toys that play for the child — such as dolls, stuffed animals, phones, and books that talk, sing, dance, or jump when a button is pushed; hand-held computer games that children play with by themselves; play computers that say the alphabet, colors, numbers, or make animal sounds.

Toys that teach violence — such as guns, swords, action figures of professional wrestlers, balls made to look like bombs, toys from horror TV shows or movies.

Toys that don't allow children to choose how to play with them — such as play-dough molds to make shapes in only one way or construction toys that can only be built in one way.

Toys that are linked to TV programs, movies, music, and video games for teens or adults — such as dolls based on teenage stars and pop music, "pretend" body piercings and tattoos; action figures, dolls, and other toys linked to PG-13 or R-rated movies.

Toys that are linked to advertising, candy, and unhealthy foods — such as toys with the name or logo of a fast food restaurant on them, books or games based on name brand or junk foods.



Pennsylvania Pathways

Professional Development
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Cooperative Extension
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Developed by Lyn Horning, Better Kid Care Program

Dr. James E. Van Horn, Better Kid Care Program Director

Developed by Penn State Better Kid Care Program

253 Easterly Parkway, State College, PA 16801 • Phone: 1-800-452-9108 • Website: betterkidcare.psu.edu

Sources: Choosing Toys of Value, by Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment

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