

Choosing the Right Toys for Your Child



Play is more than just entertainment for children. It is the way children discover the world around them, and develop the physical, mental, social, emotional, and creative skills needed to mature and thrive. Make sure the toys you choose are safe for your child, and appropriate for their age group. Below are some helpful suggestions for buying toys for your children.

Toy Safety

- Read toy labels carefully. They will help you choose age-appropriate and safe toys. Any toy intended for children age 3 to 6 is required to carry a warning if the toy contains small parts, small balls, marbles, or a balloon. Other toy labels to look for include “flame retardant/flame resistant” on fabric products, “surface or machine washable” on stuffed toys and dolls and “UL Listed” (for Underwriters Laboratories) on toys that operate on electricity.
- Check that the eyes and noses of stuffed animals and dolls are adequately secured. Choose rattles, teething rings, and squeeze toys of appropriate size. Avoid latex balloons, which can become a choking hazard.
- Once purchased, toys must be properly maintained to ensure safe play. Check toys routinely for cracks, sharp edges, or loose components. Remind your child to let you know when a toy is broken. Those that cannot be repaired should be discarded.
- Be extremely cautious when purchasing toys with components that fly or “shoot.” Those toys usually have protective tips intended to prevent injury. However, if the tip becomes dislodged, it can cause injuries.
- Avoid toys with long cords or strings for young children. Especially avoid suspending toys with ribbons or cords in cribs or playpens. These may become entangled around a child’s neck, possibly resulting in strangulation. Remove all crib toys that are strung across crib or play pen areas when babies begin to kneel or 5 months of age, whichever comes first.
- Avoid toys that produce loud noises, especially toy caps, noise-making guns, musical instruments, and other loud toys. Repeated exposure to loud noises can potentially damage a child’s hearing.
- Keep toys designed for older children away from younger children.
- Electric toys and those with heating elements must be used under adult supervision, to avoid burns and electricity-related injuries.
- Store toys safely, and teach children to put toys away to avoid accidents.
- If you buy a bicycle for any age child, buy a helmet too, and make sure your child wears it.
- When purchasing arts and crafts supplies such as crayons and paint sets, look for the label “ASTM D-4236,” which means the product has been reviewed for safety and is labeled with appropriate warnings where applicable.

In addition:

- Consider introducing your children to “true toys” such as dolls, blocks, etc. that allow children to use their imaginations.
- Read to your children, beginning at an early age.
- Provide a balance of organized activities and free play for children.
- Understand that toys are never a substitute for parental attention.
- Remember that a good toy need not be expensive.
- Realize that it has never been demonstrated that a particular toy will facilitate child development.
- Use books and magazines to play with your children.
- Limit video game and computer game use to less than 1 to 2 hours a day. Young children should only be allowed to access to the Internet under adult supervision.

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