

Selecting safe toys

in Adult Education Resource Center

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Quick Facts

Things to be considered in selecting safe toys include appropriateness for the child's age and development, safety and ease of operation.

Toys should be chosen carefully; any toy can be dangerous if misused.

Infants need toys that are attention-getting; 1- to 2-year-olds like toys which can be taken apart and moved around; 2- and 3-year-olds need toys which encourage muscle and sense development.

Children, ages 3 to 4, need toys which allow imitation and make-believe; 4- to 6-year-olds are dramatic and creative and need toys which stimulate these interests; 6- to 8-year-olds need toys which help develop skills and self-confidence.

Children 8 years of age and older have interests varying with the individual child. Toys should be selected to encourage and stimulate these interests.

Many parents have a difficult time in selecting appropriate and safe toys for their children. It is difficult, especially when so many toys are available to choose from on the market. A few things to consider in selecting safe and suitable toys are these:

—Choose a toy appropriate for the child's age and development. (Many toys have age-group labels on the package.)

—Remember that younger brothers and sisters may have access to toys bought for older children.

—Check fabric labels for "nonflammable," "flame retardant" or "flame resistant" notices.

—Check instructions. These should be easy to read and understand. Instruct the child in the proper use of any toy that might cause injury through misuse.

—Avoid toys that produce excessive noise. (Even toy cap pistols fired too close to a child's ear can cause damage.)

—Avoid shooting games, especially those involving darts and arrows, unless the games are played under parental supervision.

—When choosing a toy for small children, make sure it:

- is too large to be swallowed,
- does not have detachable parts which can lodge in the windpipe, ears or nostrils,
- is not apt to break easily into small pieces or leave jagged edges,
- does not have sharp edges or points,
- has not been put together with easily exposed straight pins, sharp wires, nails, etc.,
- is not made of glass or brittle plastic,
- is not poisonous or toxic,
- does not have parts which can pinch fingers or catch hair,
- does not have long cords, and
- for children of all ages, avoid thin plastic bag material.

—Choose toys carefully. Any toy can be dangerous if misused. There is no substitute for parental judgment and supervision. Even after purchase, it remains the responsibility of the adult to examine the toy from time to time to assure that wear and tear has not uncovered a hazardous situation.

Following is a suggested range of toys suitable for different ages with various safety tips.

Up to 1 year. Playthings for the infant should be attention attracting. Choose things to look at, to feel, to chew, to hold and to drop. Toys should be washable, nonbreakable and designed with no sharp edges which might cut or scratch. They should be large enough so that they cannot be swallowed, and there should be no small attachments which might become loose and be put into ears, nose, or mouth.

1. Brightly-colored objects hung where he can see them.
2. Squeak and water toys—rubber, or washable cloth.
3. Rattles—sturdy and nonflammable; a poorly constructed rattle may come apart, freeing the little stones for the baby to put in his mouth.
4. Teething beads.
5. Washable stuffed dolls or animals, made of soft cloth or oilcloth and embroidered eyes. (Button eyes may be removed and replaced with embroidered ones.)
6. Colored balls — large and painted with nonpoisonous paint.
7. Cups or any smooth object to chew on—unbreakable.
8. Plastic measuring spoons.

1 to 2 years of age. This is the age when the child loves to investigate the world about him. Choose playthings which can be taken apart and put back together again. Objects which can be moved from one place to another help teach coordination. Toddlers, like infants, put everything into the mouth. Avoid small toys which may be swallowed. Select sturdy toys, not too large or heavy for the child's ability.

1. Large blocks with rounded corners, smooth and free of rough spots and splinters.
2. Nests of objects which fit together.
3. Sand box (sharp corners of box cut off and rounded) with appropriate tools which are sturdy and rust-proof. The sand box should be kept covered when not in use and should be inspected frequently for sharp objects which might cut or scratch the child.
4. Push-and-pull toys—with strings or rounded handles and no small parts to come loose.
5. Peg boards of bright colors with large pegs.
6. Small chairs and table suitable to the child's height.
7. Boxes—simple ones to open and close.
8. Water toys.
9. Cloth books with familiar objects.
10. Telephones.
11. Pots and pans.
12. Music boxes.

2 to 3 years of age. This is the age of experimentation. The child likes to build things with blocks, to turn the pages of books in order to experiment with newly-found abilities. So choose playthings which will help to develop the senses and the muscles. At this age, the child begins to enjoy playing with others. Toys which he can share will encourage his social development. Beware of objects which may cut or scratch, pointed objects which may be dangerous to the eyes, and small things which may be swallowed.

1. Large nesting blocks.
2. Wooden animals—smooth, with no sharp or pointed edges. Examine for loose nails or tacks.
3. Kiddie cars or tricycles—sturdy and tip-proof.
4. Finger paints made of vegetable or fruit coloring so that the child will not be poisoned if he or she should drink some.
5. Cars and wagons to push around. Choose sturdy, nontippable ones.
6. Miniature wheel barrow—sturdily constructed and easy to wheel.
7. Modeling clay.
8. Rocking horse—low enough so that if child falls injury will be avoided.
9. Crayons.
10. Books.

1/gordon g. geddes, csu extension assistant professor, child development and family relationships.
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3 to 4 years of age. Even an infant likes to imitate others, but around age 3, the child especially tries to imitate older brothers and sisters or grownups. Children of this age group live in a "let's pretend" world and learn by doing. Toys which encourage the make-believe spirit are good. Help the child to learn to use play equipment safely. Select sturdy playthings which will stand up under vigorous child's play.

1. Small brooms and carpet sweepers.
2. Toy telephone.
3. Crayons and large paper. Crayons should be nonpoisonous and large.
4. Dolls — with simple wrap-around clothes to be put on and taken off.
5. Doll buggies and beds.
6. Toy dishes—unbreakable and large enough so that they cannot be put into the mouth.
7. Simple wooden puzzles—with parts large enough so that they cannot be swallowed.
8. Miniature tools to use in the garden, strong and well made. (Teach the

child to use these safely and to put them away carefully. Many parents prefer wooden rakes and hoes with rounded edges.)

9. Suitcases to pack and unpack. Be sure that there are no sharp edges to cut, or locks which might pinch the fingers.
10. Wading pool. Water should be very shallow and play should be supervised. A small child can drown in only a little water.
11. Painting sets—nonpoisonous paint. An easel which is adjustable to height will serve for many years.

4 to 6 years of age. This is the dramatic and creative age. Little people love to play at dramatics as well as continuing to play at being grownups. Since the child is busy at this age learning to read and write, provide play equipment which will stimulate these interests. Also provide adequate space for the child to play both inside and out and be certain that low shelves or chests are available for storing playthings so that they cannot be stumbled over by members of the family.

1. Simple construction toys.
2. Dolls and doll accessories.
3. Dollhouse and furniture.
4. Chalkboard and chalk.
5. Paints and paint books—nonpoisonous paint. Short, blunt-handled brush.
6. Wash tub and board.
7. Table and chair appropriate to child's size—chairs which have a metal frame and plywood back and seats which are sturdy, light-weight and easy for the child to move about.
8. Skipping ropes. Teach child to skip rope on soft ground rather than on hard surface.
9. Small iron and ironing board. The iron should not be too hot and the child learning to iron should wear a mitten to protect the hand.
10. Crayons, colored pencils, paper.
11. Large cardboard boxes.

12. Books.
13. Modeling clay.
14. Scissors for cutting out pictures. A well-made durable steel scissor with blunt ends is a good long-time investment.
15. Outdoor swings and playground equipment. Swings and stationary play equipment may be firmly set 3 feet deep in concrete. Wooden equipment should be made of strong wood which does not splinter. Rough edges should be smoothed. All playground equipment should be frequently inspected and kept in good condition. Worn ropes on swings are specially hazardous. Waterproof rope is more durable.
16. Costumes and play clothes for dramatic play. Children love to dress up. Be certain that play clothes are made of nonflammable fabrics.

6 to 8 years of age. At this age the child is particularly interested in developing manipulative ability. Select play equipment which will help to develop the child's skills and self-confidence. Do not give playthings which may cause an accident because these are too complicated for the youngster's ability.

1. Simple games and puzzles.
2. Sewing materials.
3. Carpenter bench and well-constructed tools. Hammers should be lightweight and with rather large heads securely fastened so that they won't fly off. Nails should be large. Sharp tools should be used only under adult supervision.
4. Construction sets.
5. Sled.
6. Roller skates. These should be well constructed and with ball bearing action. There should be a rubber shock absorber under the front

7. Equipment for playing store, house, etc.
8. Playground equipment.
9. Kites. String should be made of nonconductive material. Wire string may cause shock if kite drops across a power line. Cotton string is safest, but any string will conduct electricity if wet. Teach child to fly kite away from electric wires.

8 years of age and older. From eight years of age and on into adolescence, the interests of the child vary according to individual preferences. Select plan material which stimulates the various interests and things which encourage development of speed and accuracy. A background of safe play habits will serve the child well in his or her ever-increasing world of new experiences and will enable the youngster to protect himself from accidents.

1. Construction or model building sets.
2. Carpenter bench and tools. New tools such as saws and drills may be added as the youngster learns to use them safely.
3. Bicycle. Correct size for child and mechanically safe.
4. Hobby material. Arts and crafts, photography, coin and stamp collection, puppet shows, etc.
5. Games.
6. Electric train. Should be approved by Underwriters' Laboratories and should be frequently inspected for defects.
7. Sports and gym equipment.
8. Outdoor playground equipment.
9. Musical instruments.
10. Books.
11. Equipment and materials to encourage individual skills, interests or vocational abilities.

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