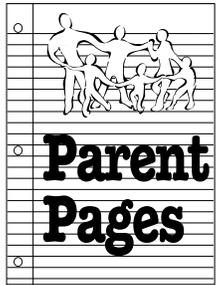


# Toy-Buying Guidelines



Billions of dollars are spent on children's toys that are broken or discarded after a few weeks, and parents face tough choices between pleasing their children and getting the most for their money. Here are some guidelines for toy purchases.

## **Choose toys that promote and enhance children's play.**

Good toys foster creativity and imaginative play. They allow children to make and build things, play make-believe and form their own interpretations of the world.

## **Select toys that are open-ended.**

Open-ended playthings can be used over and over in a variety of different and sometimes novel ways. Old stand-bys like blocks and dolls last a lot longer than a wind-up toy that can be used in only one or two ways.

## **Choose toys with a capacity to change.**

Simply designed toys lend themselves to many opportunities. Play is promoted when children ask, "What can I do with this toy?" rather than "What can the toy do?"

## **Don't be fooled by television toys.**

Many toys advertised on television and many television character toys have limited potential for play. Most of the heavily promoted toys are new items that have not stood the test of time. Help children resist the temptations of television by setting limits on toy requests and letting them see the toys as they actually are in stores.

## **Buy some toys that promote parent/child interaction.**

Although some parents prefer that children amuse themselves, playing with your child brings fun to and improves the parent-child relationship. Playing together also helps the parent understand how the child sees the world. If you buy playthings that you find intriguing, you'll be more interested in your child's play. However, avoid the temptation to buy toys that interest you more than your child.

## **Avoid toys that perpetuate gender stereotypes.**

Some toys and their packaging suggest that they are suitable for girls only or boys only. Young children of both sexes like to play with all kinds of toys and should have that opportunity. Toys, games and books that promote stereotypes teach children misinformation and limit their potential.

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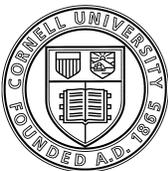
## **Consider age and individual appropriateness.**

Keep in mind the child's age, interests and abilities when purchasing toys. Most toy manufacturers label their products for age recommendations based on safety regulations, children's interests and developmental norms. Use these guidelines to develop your own assessment about the suitability of the toy for your child.

## **Buy only sturdy, durable and safe toys.**

Parents and others concerned with children must take care when purchasing toys and should supervise children's play to ensure that children are safe. Always follow manufacturers' recommendations and instructions regarding safe use of the toy. Here are some additional recommendations for buying safe toys.

1. Look for quality design and construction in all toys for all ages. Stick with reputable manufacturers.
2. Choose toys that can easily be cleaned and sterilized.



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3. Pay attention to labels.

- Fabric and cloth materials should be labeled "flame-resistant" or "flame-retardant."
- Stuffed animals and toys should be labeled "washable/hygienic materials."
- Painted toys and art materials should be labeled "non-toxic."

4. Avoid the following::

- Toys with sharp edges, pointed parts or staples that can cut or puncture
- Toys with cords and strings that can strangle young children
- Toys with small parts that can easily be swallowed or become lodged in a young child's throat
- Items like dart guns with propelled parts that can injure eyes
- Loud toys that can injure hearing
- Electric toys that can cause an electric shock or burn young children
- Hand-me-down toys that don't meet current safety standards

5. Follow manufacturer's directions for toy use.

*Source: JTim Jabn, Human Development Specialist, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County. Parent Pages was developed by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County.*

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