

PLAY! PLAY! PLAY!

Choosing Toys for Your Preschooler

Finding the best toys for your child can be overwhelming and exhausting! However, keeping your child's interests and development in mind can make the task easier and bring hours of joy to your little one. When choosing appropriate toys for children, keep these guidelines in mind:



SAFETY – Start by reading labels and checking for a recommended age group. Don't buy a toy thinking that your child will "grow into it." A toy that is not suitable can lead to frustration or boredom. Keep in mind, also, any younger children in the home and beware of toys with small pieces, sharp edges, or poor construction. Go for **QUALITY**, not **QUANTITY**! For more information on toy safety, visit www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/grand/toy/toysafe.html

KEEP IT SIMPLE - Toys that are open-ended, such as blocks, can be used in many different ways, foster creativity & imagination, and have more life & value to them than the toys that will soon be yesterday's "fad". *It isn't what the toys does, but what the child does with the toy that matters.*

DRESS UP BOX – children love to pretend they are different characters. Through role-playing, they gain social skills, language, and problem-solving skills. Fill a suitcase or under-the-bed box with clothing, hats, jewelry, and purses. Thrift stores are a great place to look for unusual and fun clothing.

PUPPETS – puppets can take on any number of personalities. Be sure to have at least two puppets handy to encourage communication between them.

TOOL BOXES, KITCHEN SETS, DISHES, OLD TYPEWRITERS or anything else that looks "grown up". Preschoolers love to pretend they are the special adults in their life.

DOLLS – Life-like dolls for dressing and cuddling are a must-have in every child's room. Even boys like to pretend they are "Daddy". Ethnic dolls are recommended to promote an appreciation of different races. There are many dolls on the market that do everything under the sun, but the dolls that will last are ones that are soft, simple and realistic.



PUZZLES – Your perfecting fine-motor and Puzzles are an excellent choice. Be sure to choose puzzles that are appropriate for your child’s skill level so as not to cause frustration.

preschooler is working at problem-solving skills.

LACING CARDS AND BEADS – Heavy, thick lacing cards in a variety of shapes and colorful beads for stringing are great for exercising the small muscles of the hand. Hand-eye coordination and pre-math skills, such as patterning are also encouraged with these toys.

BUILDING BLOCKS AND LEGOS – These are perhaps some of the best toys for children! Because they are so open-ended and versatile, children can spend hours building and rebuilding. Add some props, such as people or animals to extend the life of blocks. Building with blocks benefits every area of your preschooler’s development.

BALLS of different sizes and shapes are great fun and get your child moving!

RIDING TOYS, WAGONS, & STROLLERS for riding, pushing, or pulling help develop large muscles and coordination. Don’t forget the helmet!

ART SUPPLIES – Art activities not only encourage creativity, but prepare your child for writing by strengthening the small muscles of the hand. Fill a box or tote with art supplies such as paint, paper, stencils, playdough, brushes, feathers (for painting), fingerpaints, scissors, glue, and glueables such as pom-poms, buttons, beads, and paper shapes. Remember, Mom and Dad, that it is the *process*, not the end product that is important for your child.



BOOKS – One can never have enough books! How about giving a special hard-cover book that is sure to become a family heirloom? Don’t forget to write a special message to your child on the inside cover!

GAMES which promote family togetherness make great gifts. Be sure the game is age appropriate and doesn't require an engineering degree to put together. Remember, patience is the key to playing games with preschoolers. Their attention span may not last as long as the game and they may want to make up their own rules, but there are wonderful benefits just the same.

SCIENCE KITS for that budding young scientist also make great gifts. Magnets, magnifying glasses, bug houses, ant farms, and rock collecting kits are a few ideas.

MUSICAL TAPES, CD'S & DVD'S featuring musical artists such as Rick Charette, Greg & Steve, and the Wiggles offer fun songs that are sure to get the whole family up and moving! The Wee Sing audios are also great choices.

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