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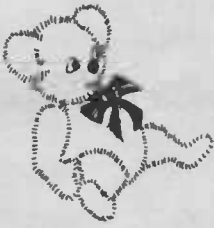
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children & toys



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Toys are the tools a child uses as, through his play, he gains mastery of himself and his environment. Toys are important at every age level, though they fill different functions at various ages. Throughout the childhood years, toys stimulate the social, physical, personality and intellectual development of the child.

WHAT DO TOYS DO FOR A CHILD?

Toys contribute to social development

Toys can:

- help children progress from solitary play to cooperative play.
- help children learn to share with others.
- provide a way to make contact with other children and thus provide new ideas and social experiences.
- help children play out adult life roles.

Toys foster physical development

Toys can:

- encourage small muscle development and coordination if they are appropriate to the size and strength of the child.
- foster the development and control of the large muscles of the body by using climbing equipment, blocks, and other outdoor toys.

Toys encourage personality development

Toys can:

- encourage maturity of behavior if they can be used constructively.
- foster the uniqueness of each child by providing ways in which he can express his individuality and his impressions of his environment.
- help children develop feelings of self-confidence and adequacy as they control and manipulate toys.
- help the child to channel his emotions into constructive outlets by providing for safe release of aggressive feelings.

Toys stimulate intellectual development

Toys can:

- expand the child's knowledge of the physical properties of the world.
- foster creative thinking by lending themselves to a variety of uses.
- provide sensory stimulation through color, texture, shape, size, smell, taste and sound.
- help children increase their vocabulary and learn new meanings of words.

TOYS FOR INFANTS AND BABIES

The new-born baby does not need toys. All he needs is someone who loves him, cuddles him and takes care of his physical needs.

After a few weeks, he is ready for some simple toys. One of the first toys he needs is a bright colored mobile hung where he can see it. He will enjoy colorful animals or objects placed where he can see them.

A light-weight rattle with a pencil-like handle is the next toy he needs. A tiny baby has what is known as the grasp reflex. He can hold tightly to anything he can grasp. When he is about 4 months old, he loses this ability. Around six months or one year of age, he learns to hold on to things with his thumb and index finger. He also learns to drop things at around one year of age.

A baby needs experience with different sounds to foster development of his hearing. Toys that make soft sounds are suitable for the infant.

As eye muscles develop and arm control increases, toys which stimulate a child to reach aid development.

A baby develops at such a rapid rate during the first year that you need not buy toys that will last a long time. But, they should not be so poorly made that they will break when hit, chewed, or dropped. They should survive constant washing.

Since most things go into the mouth, rubber, plastic or unpainted wooden toys are best. They should not have any sharp or loose parts that can be chewed off and swallowed. No buttons on toy animals please!

TOYS FOR TODDLERS AND RUNABOUTS

These tiny tots continue to grow rapidly. They learn to creep, to stand up and to sit down. They learn to walk. One of the most difficult things they have to learn is to back up to a chair and sit down!

They do things to see how they feel, instead of to accomplish something. They still put things in their mouths. They like to drop objects into holes and to put their fingers into holes. They are exploring all the time.

When they stand, they do not have a very good balance, so they need push-pull toys to help with balance. They like to carry things and to make noise.

Toys which will provide these experiences aid development. Toys should be durable and safe. Cuddly toys fit into the child's development and stimulate growth.

TOYS FOR TWO'S TO SIXES

The six-year-old will enjoy many of the same toys as a two-year old, but he will use them in a different way.

The two and three-year old will line up a row of blocks or pile blocks on top of one another and knock them down. Older children will use them to build elaborate structures and to engage in make-believe play. School age children will use the same blocks but in a more complicated way.

A young child will enjoy a wagon to pull around. The older child will use it to haul things or as a scooter.

Cars, trucks, trains and airplanes are favorites of this age group.

Blocks and other building toys help the child develop a sense of mastery and control.

Toys for housekeeping play such as dishes, stoves, dolls, beds, suitcases, lunch boxes, brief cases stimulate the imagination and help a child understand the world in which he lives.

Dolls are suitable for both boys and girls. The kind of dolls which can be bathed and mothered are most suitable. Four and fives are interested in clothes for the dolls and dress-up clothes for themselves.

There is no end to toys that are suitable for this age group. Safety and durability are important features.

TOYS FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

School age children have a new world of toys opening to them because of their improved eye-hand coordination and the development of skills. There is great variation in the speed of development, and a child's interest in toys continues to be related to his physical, mental, and social development.

During the school years, toys occupy a less important role in a child's development than during the pre-school years. At this age he spends his time in school and in group play. However, he still needs and wants toys which allow him to work alone.

Children this age are interested in doing things, group games and learning about the world around them. Toys which provide these opportunities and stimulate development are good choices at this age. These children are greatly influenced by advertising and their friends. They have definite personal preferences, which need to be respected.



HOW DO YOU CHOOSE A TOY?

Ask yourself:

- Is it appropriate to the age of the child?
- Can it be used in a variety of ways?
- Can it be used at various ages?
- Does it stimulate creative activity on the part of the child?
- Is it safe?
- Is it durable?
- Does it capture the child's interest?
- Does it work as it should?
- Does it contribute toward the parent's goals for the child?
- Does it contribute to a well-balanced collection of toys?
- Does it foster growth and development?

The above check list is meant to serve as a guide. Some toys may not rate very high on this check list, but may represent a child's special wish or desire and may become a favorite possession. If such toys are not harmful, and if they are within the price range of the giver, joy is brought to the heart when a special yearning is granted.

On the other hand, parents should not be hesitant to forbid certain types of toys.

Toys on the forbidden list might be those which:

- Are too mature for a certain child.
- Stimulate too much excitement, aggression, or appear to contribute to misbehavior.
- Are beyond the financial means of the family.
- Cause anger and frustration.
- Foster values parents do not uphold.



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