

Help!

The toybox is full, and the holidays are coming!



A Parent's Guide to Choosing High-Quality Toys

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- **Select toys without batteries or screens.** The more the toy does, the less your child does. High-tech toys may command your child's attention, but they limit creativity, imagination, and the development of functional language and motor skills. Well-designed toys allow your child to provide all the power, all the imagination, and all the sound effects. Choose toys that do nothing!
- **Limit toys that force-feed academics.** Look for toys that allow your child to learn naturally through discovery and exploration. Don't feel pressured to buy educational toys that teach letters, numbers, shapes, and colors...those concepts are best learned during naturally occurring interactions (e.g. "*Do you want the blue cup or the red one?*").
- **Think quality over quantity.** Rather than purchasing a lot of inexpensive toys, consider buying fewer high-quality toys that are well-constructed and will stand the test of time. Choose toys that are safe and durable and remember, you get what you pay for. (Recommended toy brands: *Melissa & Doug, Battat, Playmobil, Fat Brain, Learning Resources*)
- **Select toys that are interesting to your child but expose him or her to new toys as well.** If your child likes trains and already has a collection at home, try choosing vehicle-themed toys other than trains. Think boats, garbage trucks, buses, or rockets. If you really want to stick to the train theme, then look for train-themed puzzles, blocks, books, stickers, coloring books, dress-up clothes, and so on instead of just buying more toy trains.
- **Choose toys that spark your child's imagination.** Look for toys that encourage open-ended, creative play. Selecting some generic toys that are *not* based on movie or cartoon characters will allow your child to create new play schemes, rather than just re-enacting scenes from shows and movies.
- **Look for toys that are developmentally appropriate.** The goal is for your child to be successful during playtime while challenging his or her abilities just enough to enhance development. Toys that are too advanced can cause unhealthy frustration levels in young children.
- **Remember that books are toys too!** Look for interactive books with touch-and-feel pages or flaps that open and close. Be sure to buy sturdy board books for babies and toddlers.
- **To help manage clutter,** use this equation: for every new toy added, one toy is donated.