

Toy Tips

Choose your child's toys with care, based on his age, interests, and skill level. Children need different toys at different stages of their growth.

Look for quality.

Ask some simple questions: Is the toy put together well? Will it survive the rough treatment a young child may give it? Are there rough edges or pieces that will break off? Does it look "tasty?" Is it small enough to fit in a child's mouth?

Be a label reader.

Make sure the toy is appropriate for the child's age. Look for age recommendations, such as "Not recommended for children under three." Look for these safety labels: "non-toxic" on painted toys; "flame retardant/flame resistant" on fabric products; and "washable/hygienic materials" on stuffed toys, animals, and dolls.

Teach your child how to operate the toy.

Make sure he understands all the directions and instructions to get the most fun out of the toy.

Maintenance:

Check all toys often for breakage and potential hazards. A broken toy should be thrown away or repaired right away. Sharp edges on wooden toys and places where they have become splintered must be sanded smooth. Use paint labeled "non-toxic" to repaint toys and toy boxes.

Check all outdoor toys regularly for rust and weak or sharp parts that could present a danger to your child. Rain and dew can rust toys, causing them to break.

Toy boxes also must be checked for safety. Look for sharp edges, hinges that could pinch and lids so heavy they could trap a child inside. Remove the lid to prevent injuries.

Storage:

Teach children to put their toys away on shelves or in a toy chest to prevent falls and other injuries. Use a toy box without a lid. Take care of sharp edges that could cut, pinch, or squeeze a child's skin.