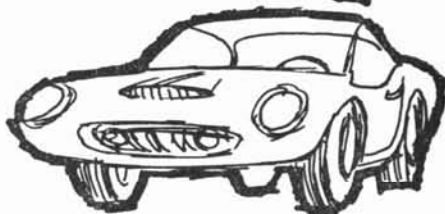
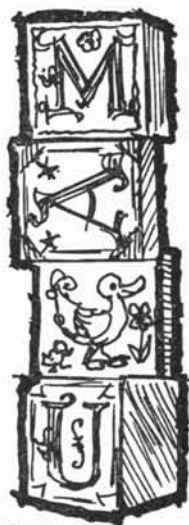
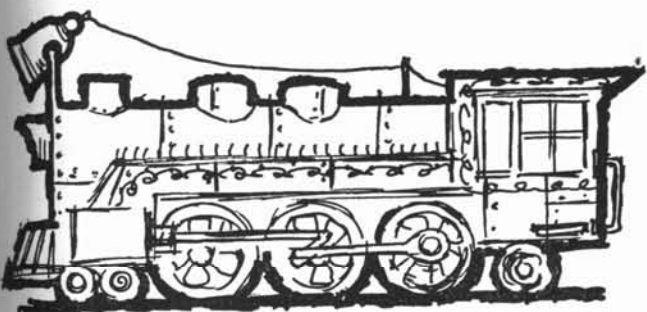


# WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN TOYS



Toys are used as "tools of learning." As good tools they should serve one or more of these purposes:

- Further the child's muscular development
- Further the development of motor skills
- Strengthen relationships with other children
- Stimulate the child to be creative
- Provide practice in reasoning and imagination
- Explore the arts and sciences
- Lead to understanding the world around him
- Develop future hobbies and careers
- Let the child have fun

Toys should be selected that fit the child's environment and interests, not an adult's interests. The selection may depend some on whether the child has many playmates or few, and on how much space the child has to play in.

Here are several guides to follow in selecting toys and play materials that will be of real value to the child.

### **Is it safe?**

Choose durable well-finished toys. Avoid sharp edges, materials that splinter or shatter easily, and brittle light-weight plastics. Avoid toys with small, fragile, loosely fitted parts, particularly for preschoolers. Check the label for the kind of paint—the label should state that it is non-toxic.

### **Does it fit the child's play interests?**

Understanding a child's many play interests will give a clue to the play materials and toys he will enjoy. Children have different interests at different times. Sometimes you need to buy a gift for a child that you don't have much chance to observe. Seeing what other children of the same age like will give you a clue since many children have similar play interests at the same age.

### **Is it suitable for his age?**

Babies like squeaky toys and colorful rattles.

Toddlers like push-pull toys, puzzles, blocks, soft cuddly toys for loving.

Preschoolers like wheel toys, store-keeping toys, and more blocks.

Early schoolers like dolls and accessories, jacks, marbles, tops, kites, and all sports equipment.

Late schoolers and teens go for model kits, science kits, games of skill.

### **Does it match the child's development?**

Some children are more skillful than others. Remember also that as a child grows, his development changes, and as his development changes, his abilities change.

### **Is the size suitable?**

Manipulating his toys is a child's main source of exercise in his constant struggle to make his own hands and arms do what he wants them to. For preschoolers the toys and play materials should be large enough for inexperienced fingers to use. Large crayons, paint brushes, and pencils, large wing nuts, and puzzles with larger pieces serve this purpose.

Small, slender, graceful dolls and intricate mechanical toys should be for older children, those 7 to 12 years old. They can handle the small pieces of doll clothing, the model kits, and the small tools.

### **Will the child really play with it?**

For the preschool child, avoid toys and play materials that create the adult world in miniature. He wants his imagination challenged and is not interested in automatic electrically operated toys that do everything by themselves. The preschooler does not want to be rigidly confined in play situations by toys that he cannot manipulate by himself. Toys such as blocks and wagons allow the child the versatility he wants in play.

Older children of school age (7 to 12) often welcome automatic toys and relatively adult-world ideas. Even at these ages, however, the vast difference in play interests among children must be recognized.

### **Can it be shared with friends?**

Sometimes we should think about buying duplicates instead of always wanting something different. Think of the potential for fun in two, three, or four sets of the same blocks. Or in two telephones for a pint-sized

conversation, or three tea sets, or a whole fleet of little boats, trains, cars, or planes.

Pound blocks of clay, reams of inexpensive paper, large bottles of poster paints, full skeins of yarn, large boxes of crayons, dozens of pipecleaners — all of these offer wide incentives for group play.

### **Is it fun?**

Children need toys for fun. They need them to satisfy the urge to be active, to be up and doing. Toys and play materials satisfy their need for investigating, exploring, experimenting, discovering, manipulating, and creating, activities that are an important part of their growth.

#### **SELECT TOYS WITH THESE POINTS IN MIND**

- Children need toys and play materials during the entire year, not just at holidays or birthdays.
- Choose play materials suitable for the child.
- Choose for his age.
- Choose to match the child's development.
- Choose for the child's fun.

**This circular was prepared by John A. Shultz, Assistant Professor of Family Life Extension.**

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