



## Choosing Toys of Value

All toys listed are suitable for girls and boys. Age guidelines represent youngest age for safety and appropriateness. However, we have selected toys that children can use throughout their early years.

### Toys have enhanced play value when they . . .

- Can be used in many ways.
- Allow children to determine the play.
- Appeal to children at more than one age or level of development.
- Are not linked to video games, TV or movies.
- Can be used with other toys for new and more complex play.
- Will stand the test of time and continue to be part of play as children develop new interests and skills.
- Promote respectful, non-stereotyped, non-violent interactions among children.
- Help children develop skills important for further learning and a sense of mastery.

### Choose toys that promote . . .

➤ ***Dramatic Play.*** Helps children work out their own ideas about their experiences. Provides a powerful way of learning new skills and a sense of mastery. Examples: blocks, toy vehicles- cars, trucks, planes, boats; dress up clothes, small animals, dolls, stuffed animals, puppets, props to recreate real life (post office, restaurant, store), materials for creating small worlds like doll houses, castles.

- |  |                        |             |
|--|------------------------|-------------|
| • <b>Tote Along Garden (International Playthings)</b>  | <b>Ages 3 &amp; up</b> | <b>\$15</b> |
| 12 accessories, 6 pockets, mesh bottom on tote can be used in sandbox, garden or container of dirt/sand. |                        |             |
| • <b>Junior Chef (Schylling)</b>   | <b>Ages 3 &amp; up</b> | <b>\$25</b> |
| 8 piece enamel cookware set - pots, pans and utensils.   |                        |             |
| • <b>Cutting Food Box (Melissa &amp; Doug Classic Wooden Toys)</b>                                       | <b>Ages 3 &amp; up</b> | <b>\$20</b> |
| 2 wooden knives, 2 cutting boards - 33 wooden pieces that can be sliced into (pre-cut) pieces.           |                        |             |

➤ ***Manipulative Play with Small Play Objects.*** Develops small muscle control and eye-hand coordination. Teaches about relationships between objects, essential for understanding math and science. Examples: construction sets and toys with interlocking pieces (Legos, Lincoln Logs), puzzles, pegboards, miniature models, parquetry blocks.

- |  |                        |                            |
|--|------------------------|----------------------------|
| • <b>Melissa &amp; Doug Classic Wooden Toys</b>                                      |                        |                            |
| • <b>Pattern Blocks and Boards</b>   | <b>Ages 3 &amp; up</b> | <b>\$15</b>                |
| 120 wooden shapes. 10 pattern board  |                        |                            |
| • <b>Wooden 3-D Dominoes - Shapes / Farm / Nature themes</b>                         | <b>Ages 3 &amp; up</b> | <b>\$10</b>                |
| • <b>Wooden Magnetic Farm / Vehicles / Dinosaurs Sets</b>                            | <b>Ages 2 &amp; up</b> | <b>\$8</b>                 |
| • <b>Curiosity Kits (Curiosity Kits, Inc)</b>  | <b>Ages 4 &amp; up</b> | <b>\$14</b>                |
| "Super Dooper Build'em Up Sticks." 130 wooden sticks, dowels, beads.                 |                        |                            |
| • <b>Atollo (Atollo)</b>   | <b>Ages 5 &amp; up</b> | <b>\$3-\$13 &amp; \$26</b> |
| Endless possibilities for creating creatures, vehicles, etc. Sets of 24, 120 or 240. |                        |                            |

Support independent specialty toy stores that have made a commitment to high quality non-violent toys.

► **Creative Arts.** Encourages self-expression and the use of symbols, a vital skill for problem solving and literacy. Develops fine motor skills. Examples: poster and finger paints, assortment of blank paper of all sizes and colors, crayons and markers, scissors, glue, recycled materials, stamps, clay, weaving kits.

- **Craft materials (Creativity for Kids)** Ages 3 & up \$1.50-\$2  
Individual packages of colored sticks, pom-poms, wood shapes, feathers, jumbo pipe cleaners.
- **Wikki Stix (Omnikor)** Ages 3 & up \$6.25  
Waxed yarn sticks can be bent in many shapes. Variety of colors.
- **Magnetic Wall (Smethporth Specialty Co.)** Ages 2 & up \$20  
2'x3' folding panel magnet-receptive wallboard. Use with magnets or dry erase markers.
- **Peg Loom (Harrisville Designs)** Ages 5 & up \$20  
Weaving for beginners. Includes wool. Can make wallhangings, bags, magic carpets.

► **Physical Play.** Promotes healthy body awareness and coordination and helps let off steam. Opportunities for social interaction. Examples: bikes, scooters and other wheel toys, balls, bats, jump ropes, space trolleys, pogo sticks, giant chalk, swing sets, climbing structures, play tunnels.

- **Egg 'N' Spoon Race (International Playthings)** Ages 3 & up \$20  
Balancing game for 2-4 players/teams. Appropriate for different age levels.
- **Ring Toss (Schylling)** Ages 3 & up \$8  
Classic family game.
- **O ball (Rhino Toys)** Ages 0 to 106 \$8  
"Easiest ball in the world to catch."

► **Game Playing.** Teaches about taking turns, planning strategy, sequencing, rules, and cooperation. Examples: board games like checkers and chess, card games, jacks.

- **Amazing Animal Trivia (International Playthings)** Ages 6 & up \$20  
Wild question and answer adventure. 2-6 players. Can be non-competitive. Created by Wildlife Conservation Society.
- **Charades for Kids (Pressman)** Ages 4 & up \$14  
Act out animals, spaghetti, etc. 3-6 players. No reading required. Can be non-competitive.

### Remember the Classics!

- table blocks • ocean, farm, and rainforest animals or insects • construction sets (Legos, Lincoln Logs, etc.) • people and animal props • tool sets • flashlights • dolls with accurate features • clay • basic art supplies • blocks • cars, trucks, boats, planes and trains • dress-up clothes and housewares • bean bags • balls • jump ropes • playing cards • puzzles • tape stories • medical kits • musical instruments •

### 🔗 Things You Can Do For Free 🔗

**Reading Books.** Provides exciting content to use in play and an essential foundation for literacy. Children enjoy telling, acting out and drawing their own stories. Visit your local library. Select books with meaningful stories and characters and positive values.

**Play with Natural Materials.** Using sand, water, mud, rocks, shells and leaves cultivates a love of nature and the environment. Extend play with buckets and shovels, bubble blowers, watering cans, plastic tubing, cardboard boxes for collecting and sorting, magnifying glasses, flashlight, butterfly net, balance scales.

For more information contact TRUCE: [www.truceteachers.org](http://www.truceteachers.org)  
PO Box 441261, West Somerville, MA 02144 • e-mail: [truceteachers@aol.com](mailto:truceteachers@aol.com)

PLEASE COPY AND DISTRIBUTE



## Toys and Toy Trends to Avoid

*We have chosen toys which dramatically illustrate the harmful toy trends. Some toys could fit into more than one category.*

### Toys have limited play value when they . . .

- Can only be used in one way.
- Encourage everyone to play the same way as determined by the toy designer.
- Appeal primarily to a single age or level of development.
- Will probably sit on a shelf after the first "fun" half hour.
- Will channel children into imitating scripts they see on TV or movie screens.
- Do special high tech actions for the child instead of encouraging the child's exploration and mastery.
- Lure children into watching the TV program or other media linked to the toy.
- Promote violence and stereotypes, which can lead to disrespectful and aggressive behavior.

### Try to avoid toys that . . .

➤ ***Make Electronic Technology the Focus of Play.*** Young children, especially infants and toddlers, learn best by interacting with people and materials and by seeing their direct effect on the environment. Often billed as educational, many electronic toys control and limit play.

• **Star Wars Trivia Game (Hasbro)** **Ages 6 & up** **\$30**  
This handheld palm pilot look-alike includes an encyclopedia of trivia from every Star Wars movie ever made. It also has an organizer, alarm, calendar, calculator address book and "to do" list features which are useless to children.

• **First Impressions Loveable Lily (Leap Frog)** **Ages 1 & up** **\$20**  
Soft toy frog that claims to teach numbers, counting, time, colors and body parts when you press its nose, face and tongue. Really does little more than focus babies' "play" on pushing buttons to get a reaction.

• **Elmo's World Cell Phone (Fisher-Price)** **Ages 18 months & up** **\$10**  
Flip phone has moving eyes and animated screen. Press phone buttons to hear numbers and silly sounds instead of really talking on a play phone.

➤ ***Lure Young Girls into Focusing on Appearance.*** Promote stereotyped and sexualized behaviors, making how bodies look the sole focus of play and equating self-worth and success with appearance, including being thin and wearing make-up and skimpy clothes.

• **Amazing Christie Nails (Mattel)** **No age given** **\$10**  
20 different kinds of nails for young girls complete with stickers and stamps encourages girls to think that "doing their nails" is actually play and elevates nail fashion as an appropriate activity for young girls.

• **Barbie "Make Me Pretty Talking Styling Head" (Mattel)** **Ages 3 & up** **\$30**  
A life-size Barbie head for styling hair. "She's a pretty talking head! Should Barbie be a princess or a bride today? Just ask Barbie! She talks to you as you style her hair and do her makeup!"

➤ ***Link Non-nutritious Food to Play.*** Toys with logos of fast food restaurants and junk foods, or that make junk food the focus of the play promote poor nutrition and ensure an early, easy market for brand name foods. Products like these can contribute to obesity and eating disorders, a growing problem for children.

• **Barbie McDonald Playset (Mattel)** **Ages 3 & up** **\$10**

• **Barbie Pizza Hut Playset (Arco Toys)** **Ages 3 & up** **\$10**  
Miniature equipment so Barbie (who couldn't eat such food often and keep her shape) can prepare meals at these fast food restaurants.

• **Kellogg's FROOT LOOPS Counting Fun Book (Harper Collins)** **No age given** **\$6**  
A cardboard book like those for toddlers. Children count out sugar-coated Froot Loop cereal pieces and place them in slots in the book. Comes with Froot Loops coupon.

► **Glorify violence, including Military and War Toys.** Since September 11th and with growing talk of war, many toys of violence have appeared on the market. Such toys focus children's play on violent themes, undermine lessons adults teach, glorify war and violent behavior, and bring in scary real-world themes young children cannot fully understand.

• **Forward Command Post (Ever Sparkle Industrial)** **Ages 5 & up** **\$40**  
 Miniature building that "looks like Barbie's dream house with partially blown up walls." 75-piece set of soldier figures, toy weapons and furniture to create a "fully outfitted battle zone."

• **GI Joe Motorized Humvee with Rapid Fire Cannon (FunRise)** **Ages 3 & up** **\$40**  
 Army "attack vehicle" makes realistic battle sounds and has rapid fire air-powered cannon. "Controls are designed specifically for small fingers." (Age rating makes this toy particularly objectionable.)

• **Lego Galidor Toy Line (Lego)** **Ages 4 & up** **\$15/action figure**

• **Lego Alpha Team Toy Line (Lego)** **Ages 6, 7 or 8 & up (Varies)** **\$9 & up**

Two toy lines of interchangeable action figures and props whose sole purpose is to fight. Lego, long trusted by parents for its construction toys that encourage creative play, has changed direction with these toys.

► **Turn Children into "Media" and "Action Figure" Characters Using Dress-up Kits.** Channel children into imitating stereotyped, violent or sexualized behavior of characters on TV, in movies and from popular culture.

• **Power Rangers Wild Force Action Set (Manley Toy Quest)** **Ages 5 & up** **\$12**  
 Includes vest, mask, belt, sword so that children can fight like the Power Rangers do.

• **Barbie "Pop Sensation" (Mattel)** **Ages 3 & up** **\$25**  
 Comes with headset child can wear in order to be a pop star and "sing with Barbie."

► **Are Linked to TV Programs, Movies, and Video Games with Content Rated as Appropriate for Older Audiences.** Involve children in content not intended for them and can lead them to think that the video game, film or TV program linked to the toys is meant for them to see.

• **Play-Doh Jurassic Park III Playset (Playskool)** **Age 3 & up** **\$10**

Turns open-ended play-doh into a toy of violence. Make dinosaurs, "then destroy them with chomping action Spinosaurus' mouth," a puppet that fits over child's hand so "you can control the carnage!"

• **Spiderman and Friends Action Heroes including "Crime Fighter" and "Police Officer" (Playwell)** **Ages 3 & up** **\$8**

Community helper action figures with faces and features of Spiderman. Confuses real helpers with fantasy figures.

• **WWE & WCW Professional Wrestling Figures** **Ages vary from 4 & up** **\$6 & up**

Wrestling action figures of real life TV wrestlers do single violent actions and make hostile comments when button is pushed.

► **Undermine Good Parenting Practices.** Appeal to parents' insecurities and desire to do a good job preparing their children for school. These toys promote teaching of rote skills inappropriate for young children and how they learn.

• **Baby Shakespeare Find and Rhyme (Playskool/Hasbro)** **Ages 18 mos. & up** **\$35**

Baby Einstein Toy Line claims to teach "human expression". "Learn" object names, make rhymes of prepackaged words. Use CD to "teach more" including dependence on fast-paced media at too young an age.

#### A Letter About Fighting Toys: for Children & Adults to Talk About Together

Some kids really love toy guns and toys with weapons on them. They have fun pretending to fight with them. A lot of teachers worry about weapon toys. They think that if kids play with these toys and pretend to fight and kill, it will teach kids that it's okay to hurt people and that fighting and hurting is fun. Kids often say, "We're only pretending. We're just 'playing.'"

Some teachers say kids in their classes pretend to be characters on TV. Kids act out kicking and fighting. Then kids often really do hurt each other. It gets scary. It isn't pretend, teachers say.

Many teachers are worried. They are angry that TV shows and ads make violent toys look cool so kids want to buy them. They say companies shouldn't be allowed to sell violent toys to kids on TV.

Teachers hope this letter will help families talk together about the toys they buy and make thoughtful choices.

- What do you think about what the teachers say?
- What do you think teachers, parents and children should do about fighting toys?
- What can grown-ups do to help children be safe and learn not to fight?
- What ideas do you have about how children can play without fighting toys?

From Many Teachers All Over the Country