Stanislaus County
Office of
Education

Child/Family Services

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Toys and The Young Child

Resource & Referral Handout

Your child already has the most important toy he or she could want or need — YOU! Besides you, however, your child can learn through play and the use of toys.
In selecting toys for children, there are certain things to keep in mind.

1. **Is the Toy Safe?** Is it sturdy, with no small pieces to break off? Will it become a dangerous toy in the wrong hands?

2. **Will the Toy Last?** I feel that we often buy disappointment for children when we give them toys that will break in a couple of days. All around them, children see that they live in a throw-away world. Let's give them some things that will last and upon which they can depend.

3. **Does the Toy Meet A Developmental Need?**

   a. Toys can aid in **Physical Development** of children. They can teach coordination skill. Examples: balls; toys to push, pull or climb upon; toys that fit together; button books.

   B Toys can aid in the **Mental Development** of children. They can encourage children to reason, solve problems and think creatively. Examples: puzzles, games, blocks.

   c. Toys can aid in **Language and Social Development.** They can encourage imaginative play. Children need to try words and situations on for size. Examples: books, dolls, puppets, cars, people, dress-up clothes.

   d Toys can aid in **Discovery.** Toys can foster creative expression and experimentation. Examples: open-ended art materials; natural toys such as water, mud and sand; magnets, magnifying glasses and color viewers.

4. **Is the Toy Appropriate for the Age of the Child?**

   THE INFANT (0 - 1)—is busy learning about himself, learning to control his body and to use his senses. He responds to touch, sounds and smells. For the infant, toys can provide a stimulus for motor and sensory development. Infants need safe, simple toys that they can master. They need toys that are easy to hold onto that they can touch, feel and watch. Toy suggestions: mobiles, rattles, teethers, squeeze toys, textured toys, musical toys, baby mirrors, water toys and washable stuffed animals and dolls.

   THE TODDLER (1 - 2)—has learned about himself and now feels confident in learning about the world around him. He is especially interested in learning how to control the world around him. He

recognizes the existence of others but is still self-centered. He generally plays alone, even when surrounded by others. It is a time of development of large muscle control and a time of learning to imitate sounds and actions of others. He is very adventurous and needs toys he can safely push, pull climb on and take in and out. Toy suggestions: wooden blocks; sand box with scoops; small cars, trucks, and people; large durable trucks to push; water toys; simple dress-up toys such as hats, scarves; balls; hardcover books; simple wind-up toys; beginning puzzles; stuffed animals and dolls.

PRE-THREE (2 - 3)—concerned with self-expression, beginnings of socialization. Toy suggestions: same as the toys suggested for the toddler except he can now utilize such things as small riding toys (not a trike); table-top easels; creative materials such as paper, crayons, watercolor felt marking pens, playdough; rhythm instruments; records; puzzles; simple storybooks; play phones; small wagon.

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN (3 - 5) —still concerned with their senses, coordination, self-expression, and now more of a social awareness of others. Suggested toys: any of the previously mentioned toys plus tricycles, wagons, large blocks, balance beams, flannel boards, magnet boards, pencils, paints, scissors, paste, collage materials, pounding toys, real tools, nuts and bolts, puppets, a puppet stage, dress-up clothes, dolls and doll houses, play centers, hide-aways, sewing cards, puzzles, learning games, magnets, magnifying glasses, storybooks.

In looking for toys that help children learn to reason, keep in mind that there are four different kinds of toys that can help in this area. Examine your child's toys and see that he has at least one toy that fits into the four categories. Children need a balance of toys, learning different skills from each.

Coordination Toys— each is designed to provide practice involving a motor task that may be difficult for the child. They enable the child to become self-sufficient in his day-to-day environment. Examples: sewing cards, button frames etc.

Construction Toys— designed so that the end product is deliberately left undetermined by the materials being used. Examples: blocks, shapes, Lego.

Reconstruction Toys— involve self-correcting materials that can be taken apart and reassembled. These have degrees of difficulties. Examples: stacking toys, puzzles.

Classification Toys— all materials that require matching, patterning, grouping and most games. Examples: lotto, dominoes, beads, board games.

5. Is the Toy Nonsexist? Preschool children enjoy all types of toys and should not be limited in their play by our standards.

In conclusion - remember that children can learn through play using a variety of toys; however, nothing can replace interaction with adults, especially parents.

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