

Toy Safety

New toys can bring with them endless hours of fun, but they can also create problems and unhappy children if the toy has not been bought to suit the child. What this really means is that a toy should fit the age and developmental stage of the child. It's not good if a parent buys a young child a train set and the child is not old enough to manipulate and move the parts around.

Four 'S' Guidelines for Buying Safe Toys for Children

- **S for size**
The smaller the child the bigger the toy needs to be.
- **S for shape**
Which means no sharp or rough edges.
- **S for surface**
This should be nontoxic and non-flammable.
- **S for strings**
There should be no cords, ropes, ribbons or strings on a toy for a young child.

Guidelines to Buying Toys

- Toys should suit the age and developmental stage of the child. They should be interesting and involving. If too easy - they become boring, if too hard - they become frustrating.
- Watch age recommendations for toys - they are there for children's safety. Toy labeling for "under three" is the most important. Three-year olds and younger are more likely to place small objects in their mouths, which present swallowing dangers.
- Be aware of any parts that can be broken or detached from a toy and might be swallowed. This means anything smaller than a ping pong ball and includes items like stickers and labels. Avoid badly made toys that could come apart - for example buttons that could come loose. Again, these present swallowing hazards.
- Do not buy toys with moving parts that could pinch, cut or trap parts of a child's body. Toys should be solid, strong and well made. Strings, cords or ribbons over 30 cm long on toys can strangle a child. Avoid them.

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- Do not buy toys that need constant supervision; if a child always needs help with a toy, or has to be watched because the toy breaks easily - it is best not to buy the toy.
- Remember that everyone has to live with toys in the house - if a toy is very noisy, it may become family unfriendly. Alternative toys may be better.
- Keep older children's toys separate from younger children as much as possible - older children's toys can present danger to younger children.
- Check children's toys for wear and tear; mend them or throw them away.
- Put away toys when not in use. Throw away the packaging that covers the toys; the packaging may include ribbons, plastics and other things not safe for young children.
- Bicycles and bike helmets go together; a present of a bicycle should also include the appropriate helmet.
- Most presents of sporting equipment need to be accompanied by protective gear; for example roller blades or skateboard should come with a helmet and wrist pads.
- Do not buy toy guns that could be mistaken for real guns or that fire objects that are potentially dangerous because of their shape or speed at which they move.
- Outdoor play equipment needs impact absorbing surfaces. Trampolines should be set in the ground.
- Do not buy toys that may be a one-day wonder. Toys should have lasting interest and not just be the latest on the market.
- Any guide for a toy relates to child development and is not an intelligence guide. Although it is tempting to buy toys that may be suited to an older child, you may not be doing your own child a favor.

Source: *Safe Kids Worldwide*



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