

## SELECTION OF TOYS

The selection of toys is important. Toys should allow children to use their senses, fine and gross motor skills, and imaginations. When selecting toys, safety is an important consideration. When buying toys for infants and toddlers, consider these factors:

1. **SIZE:** The toy should be larger than the child's two fists. This includes parts of the toys as well as the entire toy.
2. **DURABILITY:** The toy should not break easily. Glass and brittle plastic are the most dangerous types of toys.
3. **NO LONG STRINGS OR CORDS:** These can get wrapped around the baby's neck.
4. **NO SHARP EDGES OR POINTS:** A toy that has been broken may have a sharp edge or point even though the original toy was safe.
5. **NONTOXIC:** It is best to avoid all painted toys for babies who put toys in their mouths.
6. **NONFLAMMABLE:** Flame retardant or flame resistant means that toys are not likely to ignite.
7. **WASHABLE AND CLEAN MATERIALS:** This is especially important in relation to dolls and stuffed toys.

When buying toys for older children, consider these factors:

1. **SAFE ELECTRIC TOYS:** Wiring and warning labels should be intact. Toys that heat are intended for children over age 8.
2. **SAFE TRICYCLES AND BICYCLES:** These should be correctly assembled. Seats should be properly adjusted and reflectors or lights should be in place.
3. **TOYS SHOULD BE USED FOR THE INTENDED AGE:** Some toys require more knowledge and motor skills on the part of the user. These toys should not be used by younger family members.
4. **NOISE AT ACCEPTABLE LEVELS:** Toys that make sounds that can result in ear damage are banned by law. However, parents may choose to ban toys that fall under the guidelines but are nevertheless too loud.
5. **STURDY, SAFE, LARGE EQUIPMENT:** Moving parts should be manufactured in such a way as to prevent pinching or crushing fingers. Bolt ends should be covered to prevent tearing skin. Large equipment should be firmly anchored to the ground, and all edges should be smooth.

**CHILD PROTECTION AND TOY SAFETY ACT:** Complaints about the safety of many toys resulted in the passage of the Child Protection and Toy Safety Act in 1969. This law gave the Food and Drug Administration the authority to remove and keep off the market hazardous toys as well as other hazardous children's products. Since the passage of this law, more than 1,500 toys have been banned. Banned toys are toys that should not be sold. Some toys were banned because of electrical hazards. Other toys with heated parts or substances or surfaces that could cause serious burns have been banned. Other toys such as toy rattles containing sharp points, rigid wires, or loose small objects that could become exposed and cause cuts are banned.

**SAFETY TESTS:** Toy safety tests have been established by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission for children of different ages. Different procedures are followed to test toys for children 18 months of age or younger and for children over 18 months and up to 8 years. Different testing procedures are used because children of different ages use toys in different ways. One test for toys for children under 18 months is to drop the toy 10 times from shoulder level (4 1/2 feet) onto a concrete surface covered with asphalt tile. This test simulates a child standing in a crib and dropping a rattle or toy over and over again. If the toy breaks, the child could be hurt by sharp plastic edges. If a toy containing rattling parts was broken, the child might put these parts into his/her mouth.

A test for toys for children over 18 months is to drop the toy four times from a height of three feet. This test simulates a child dropping a toy from a high chair. The purpose of the test is not to guarantee that certain toys will not break but to ensure that if they do break, they are not dangerous because of sharp edges or very tiny pieces.

Some toys are not safe because they have parts that can be removed such as squeakers or eyes of stuffed animals or dolls. These removable parts on toys for children under 18 months must withstand a pull of 10 pounds without coming loose. Toys for older children must withstand a pull of 25 pounds without coming loose. This test simulates a child pulling on parts of a toy such as squeakers or eyes of stuffed animals or dolls. To simulate means to pretend you are a child and do what he/she might do with a toy. The Consumer Product Safety Commission tests are all simulations. They do not have children dropping or pulling on toys. They have individuals and equipment in a laboratory drop and pull toys as children are likely to do.

Along with safety, age appropriateness should be considered. A child playing with a toy beyond his/her age level may become frustrated and could be in danger.

The skill level of the child the toy is intended for is also an important consideration. Skill levels may differ somewhat between children, so each child should be considered individually.

Toys are valuable teaching tools. Consider the concepts and skills learned from the toy and select toys that will allow the child to develop needed skills or understand new concepts.