



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ♥ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Toys: Safety and What to Look For



Play is essential to children's growth and development. Good, quality, safe toys can fuel a child's imagination and provide valuable learning opportunities. From a baby's first rattle to a preschooler's set of wooden blocks, all developmental areas (cognitive, social, language and physical) are strengthened as he plays with toys.

With so many toys to choose from, selecting an appropriate toy may not be as easy as it seems. The following two factors are important to consider when choosing a toy:

- ♥ **Safety.** Your selection of safe toys for indoor and outdoor play is an important first step in protecting a child from harm or injury.
- ♥ **Engaging.** An effective toy will capture a child's attention, keep him engaged, and provide opportunities for him to acquire and strengthen his skills.

In addition, it's important to think about the types of toys that you can provide:

- ♥ **Open-ended toys**, such as blocks, offer unlimited possibilities for play (can be stacked, knocked down, lined up, or built into a bridge, a zoo, etc.), rather than push-button electronic toys, which usually can only be played in one way.

- ♥ **Variety of toys**, including common household items, such as empty cardboard boxes, plastic or wooden kitchen utensils and bowls, or crinkly waxed paper offer a good balance and enrich children's skills and creativity. Any object that a child can explore, manipulate, build up, roll, stack or bang can become a toy.
- ♥ **Age-appropriate toys** match the developmental abilities and skills of the child. Read the toy packaging for the suggested age range for the child. If the child is functioning at a younger level than the suggested age, he may get frustrated and give up easily, or be exposed to small parts that could pose a safety risk.

In this newsletter, we will offer tips and questions to ask yourself when selecting a toy for each age level – infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

Infants learn through their senses, so they respond best to toys that they can see, touch, hear, taste and smell. They first learn by looking, then by grasping and bringing objects to their mouths. As they get older, they learn by transferring objects from hand to hand, turning them over, giving them to others, or even throwing them. Since almost every object they grasp goes directly into their mouths, making sure the toy is safe is a priority.

Ask yourself the following questions about the toy before giving it to your infant:

Safe:

- ♥ Does it meet Consumer Product Safety Standards?
- ♥ Is it solid with no breakable parts; sharp or jagged edges; or exposed nails, wires, pins, or splinters? Is it strong enough to withstand chewing?
- ♥ Are the materials washable and nontoxic? Toys made of fabric should be labeled flame resistant or flame retardant.
- ♥ Is it at least 1-1/4 inches (3 centimeters) in diameter and 2-1/4 inches (6 centimeters) in



length – so that it cannot be swallowed or lodged in their throat? If a toy is small enough (in any direction) to fit inside an empty toilet paper roll, it is too small to be in an infant's environment.

- ♥ Is it free of cords and strings-to help reduce risk of possible strangulation?

Engaging:

- ♥ Does the toy appeal to several senses?
- ♥ Does the toy resemble real life objects? (e.g., baby books with real photos or realistic drawings of animals, wooden spoons, scarves, etc.)

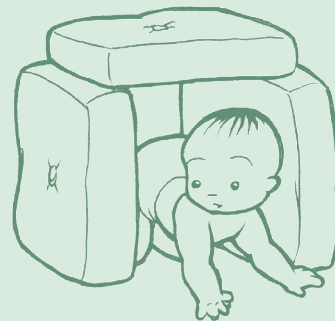
Activity for Infants: *Box Car Fun*

What You Need:

- A sturdy cardboard box big enough for a child to sit in or a laundry basket
- A pillow

What to Do:

1. When your child can sit up on his own, place him in the box or laundry basket and show him how to hold on to the sides.
2. Prop him up with a small pillow behind his back.
3. Gently push him around the room.
4. Talk about where you're going. Make car sounds as you go.



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

Toddlers

Toddlers are active explorers who learn by doing and will begin to try out materials in many ways. They will start to imitate the actions of people around him. Select toys that spark creativity and imagination, develop problem-solving skills, and provide opportunities for your child to figure things out on his own.

In addition to the questions listed in the infant section, ask yourself the following questions about the toy before giving it to your toddler:

Safe:

- ♥ Does this art material have the AP (Approved Product) seal from ACMI on its label?



Engaging:

- ♥ Does the toy encourage communication and interaction (e.g., dress up clothes, play houses, dishes and kitchen utensils, play tools)?
- ♥ Does it support discovery and exploration? Eye/hand coordination? Fine and/or large motor skills?
- ♥ Is there more than one way to use it?
- ♥ Will the toy expand his imagination?

Activity for Toddlers: *Fun with Cups*

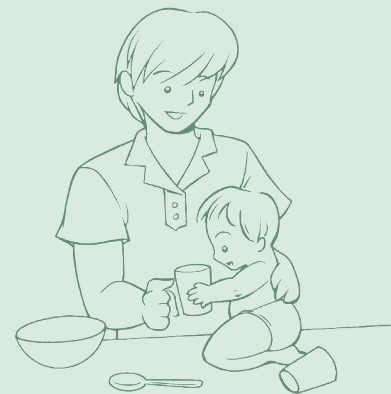
What You Need:

Unbreakable cups of different sizes, colors, and shapes
or a set of measuring cups

What to Do:

1. Put the cups in order of size and explain, "This one is the smallest. This one is the biggest."
2. Mix up the cups and ask your child to put them in order from smallest to biggest.
3. Find other ways to group and order the cups. For example, sort by color, by shape, or with a handle or without.
4. Ask your child to group the cups. Ask him why he put certain ones together. His reasons may surprise you.
5. Count the number of cups in each grouping.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Preschoolers

As preschoolers grow, so does their creativity and imagination. They begin to use the information they have gained and practiced through play. For example, you may notice preschoolers pretending to be a police officer, mechanic, teacher, or cashier. Preschoolers are also sharpening their fine-motor skills which enable them to manipulate objects with more purpose. You may see him building and creating, sorting and matching materials, fitting things together, arranging them in patterns and designs, and using toys for pretending. Preschoolers are ready for more complex materials and equipment.

Ask yourself the following questions about the toy before giving it to your preschooler:

Safe:

- ♡ Is the toy free of sharp edges and sharp points?

- ♡ Is this a propelled object? A child should never be permitted to play with projectiles, guided missiles and similar flying toys, and hobby or sporting equipment that has sharp points.
- ♡ Is the battery case of a battery-operated toy secured with screws?

Engaging:

- ♡ Does it encourage thinking or problem solving (e.g., board games or puzzles)?
- ♡ Does it involve the use of both hands (such as construction toys, gears, toss and catch sets)?
- ♡ Does it help expand language and communication skills? Social interactions? Eye/hand coordination? Fine and/or large motor skills? Does it educate the child about the environment?

Activity for Preschoolers: *Let's Go Shopping*

What You Need:

- Empty, clean food boxes and containers
- Recyclable bags for groceries
- Slips of paper (to resemble dollar bills)
- Play cash register or a box or container to resemble a cash register
- Tape or white glue

What to Do:

1. Help your child collect empty, clean food containers such as cereal boxes, bread bags, juice cartons, yogurt containers, egg cartons, and plastic condiment bottles. (Do not use glass.)
2. As you both collect items, read the labels, pointing to the letters and words.
3. Make labels and price tags for food items such as "eggs," "juice," "milk," \$1, \$2, or \$3. Tape or glue prices onto the containers.
4. Talk about the local grocery store and how it is organized (frozen foods in one section, breads in another, etc.). With your child, set up a pretend grocery store.
5. Take turns being the cashier and the customer. As you play together, talk about the food — where it comes from or how it's made, what it's used for and what it tastes like.
6. As you make a "purchase," count out bills that would make up to the item's cost.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Develop eye-hand coordination
- ♥ Use and strengthen large muscles, e.g., arms and legs

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to interact with others
- ♥ Feel important and good about himself

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase his observation, listening and understanding skills, and his attention span
- ♥ Connect words and sounds he hears with what he experiences

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop his creativity and imagination
- ♥ Begin to recognize math concepts like numbers, sizes, shapes and sequences



Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math and science concepts, fine motor skills, and language development. As you make this recipe with your child, ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Talk about kitchen safety. Show him how to handle items safely and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Most of all, have fun!

Zucchini Fries

Ingredients:

- 4 zucchini quartered lengthwise, and cut in half
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese
- ½ tsp of each herb (dried thyme, dried oregano, and basil)
- ¼ tsp garlic powder
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 Tbsp parsley

Directions:

1. Ask your child to help combine all ingredients except for the zucchini and oil into a small bowl.
2. Have him place the zucchini slices on a baking sheet. Drizzle olive oil onto each slice then ask him to sprinkle the Parmesan mixture on top.
3. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes. Then broil for 2-3 minutes or until golden brown.



Resources

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

<https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/281%281%29.pdf>

See the publication, *For Kids' Sake: Think Toy Safety by Knowing Toy Dangers*

Penn State Better Kid Care Health & Safety Basics

<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/lessons/ccdbg>

Free online module for individuals who care for and teach children to: 1) create safe spaces, 2) use safe practices with children, 3) develop and implement daily illness prevention and management strategies, and 4) plan to keep children safe if an emergency occurs.

TIMPANI Toy Study 2017

<http://www.easternct.edu/cece/timpani/>

Each year, the Center for Early Childhood Education at Eastern Connecticut State University engages in the "TIMPANI Toy Study" – a scientific investigation to find toys that are particularly powerful in supporting children's learning and development.



Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

Robots, Robots Everywhere! by Sue Fliess

There are colorful robots everywhere in this bright board book. Find them in space, under the sea and even under the couch.

Hop Hop Bunny by Betty Ann Schwartz and Lynn Seresin

Your child will use his fine motor skills to help Bunny hop through the die-cut holes as he explores the garden. This story provides a tactile interactive adventure for your little one.

Preschoolers

A Ball for Daisy by Chris Raschka

This book will share Daisy the dog's feelings of joy and sadness of having a special toy.

The Perfect Square by Michael Hall

A square, with four sides and four corners, can be turned into many amazing things even when it is ripped and torn. What will the square do next?



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