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A Grandparent's Guide To Choosing Age Appropriate Toys

By P. Davis

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 1.3 million children are entrusted to their grandparents every day. Roles of a grandparent include spoiling and enlightening their grandkids with toys they will enjoy. After all, toys are considered to be treasures of childhood. With this role comes an added responsibility to make sure that grandchildren stay safe and enjoy a toy that is age-appropriate. Grandparents make up a large percentage of toy buyers. Thousands of toys are marketed with the promise to educate and entertain kids. Unfortunately, not every toy is safe for children to play with. What can a grandparent look for when purchasing a toy for the kids that they love?

Most pediatricians and child experts believe there are a lot of hidden hazards concerning toys that people should be made aware of. Here is a guide that grandparents can use when it comes time to buy a distinctive toy for that special little person:

* Make sure the toy is age-appropriate. Labels on toy packaging should specify the age group the toy is made for. Consider that children at any age have different maturity levels. You may want to avoid buying a toy that won't hold the child's attention. Make sure to buy educational toys that match every child's age group. This will make the toy effective and fun to play with.

* Read and follow all warning labels. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission or CPSC, choking is the most common cause of toy-related deaths. Warning labels are made to alert if a toy poses a choking hazard for younger children, typically under the ages of three. Federal law requires these labels. Make sure toys made for older children are kept out of the reach of younger children. Objects such as balls should not be less than 1.75" in diameter. Avoid toys that have small parts that can potentially be pried off by tiny curious hands. Examples of toys that contain small parts are stuffed teddy bear's eyes or a wooden car's wheels. Stuffed and wooden toys are still very popular among children; just think BIG when checking out the "parts" attached to the toy. Toys should be larger than the child's mouth. Tip: if a toy or toy part can fit inside an empty toilet paper roll, chances are the toy is too small. This would not be a safe toy. If a toy contains small parts, parts should be secured and guaranteed not to come off.

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* Make sure toys are free from sharp and pointy edges. As an experienced mother or father, you are probably aware, small children have a tendency to put most things in their mouth. It is important toys are free from sharp edges as to avoid cuts and injuries. There may be danger of a child falling on top of a toy while playing. To avoid injuries, make sure pointy edges are buffered or eliminated,

* Avoid LOUD toys. Children's ears are highly sensitive and hearing can easily be damaged by loud noises. In order to find out if a toy is too loud, use your own ears as a tool. If the toy is too loud for you, it's twice as loud for the child. You can choose to take out batteries of the toy or cover speakers with tape. This method is not preferred since tape can be pulled off and the child can swallow it.

* Make sure toys are free of toxic chemicals. Toys such as art supplies, play make-up and crayons have been known to contain toxic chemicals. Before making a purchase, investigate ingredients and contents of the product by looking at the label. The same label should also provide instructions on what to do in case of accidental ingestion of any hazardous substance that the item might contain. It may be wise to consult your local poison control to use as a reference if you need one.

* Some toys come with cords or strings. If a cord or string is longer than 12 inches in length, it can pose a strangulation hazard if looped. Never cut an electrical cord! Make sure electrical cords or wires are secured and protected. Make sure to supervise if an electrical toy needs to be plugged into an outlet. Battery-operated toys are preferable to purchase, especially with young children around. However, battery doors need to be checked frequently to make sure they are secured and cannot be opened. If strings have been cut, make sure frayed edges are cut also. When purchasing crib mobiles, make sure the mobile can be safely mounted high on the crib and out of babies' reach.

* If you choose to purchase a toy over the Internet there are a few things that you should be aware of: Internet sold toys may not comply with U.S. Toy regulations. Auction sites may sell toys that have been recalled by the CPSC. This could be due to the fact the toys were hazards to children's safety. If you happen to come across a recalled toy, or you would like to see what toys have been recalled, there are web sites available to you. CPSC or

<http://Recalls.gov>

provides sites with helpful information.

* Supervise and be realistic about your grandchild's abilities and maturity levels. Ask yourself the following questions: Is the child physically ready for a certain toy? Is the toy too heavy? A heavy toy can cause severe injury if the toy falls on the child. Gauge if the child can physically control a heavy toy. Teach the child the safest way recommended by the manufacturer to use the toy properly. Again, SUPERVISE!

* Follow these tips when buying video games: follow age recommendations of each game and observe a game's ratings. Games rated T for Teen can contain violence, profanity and content not suitable for children under the age of 13. EC for early childhood or E for everyone would be the best choice of rating when buying a video game for younger children.

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* Remember the days when you would buy toys for your children? How many dollars have we spent to watch our children and now our children's children go to the kitchen cupboard, pull out all the pots and pans and wooden spoons and bang away and be happy for hours at play? Or grandparents made or bought wooden toy vehicles and wood constructed pull toys that were safe and entertaining. Maybe all the banging of pots and pans is no longer a situation we wish to experience but fun and educational wooden toys are still available.

There was a time when toys were put on the market and bought without a lot of regard for safety. Grandparents could buy any toy that surely the grandchildren would enjoy without considering if the toy was age-appropriate. It was assumed that kids were thought to have the automatic knowledge not to pick up monopoly money and put it in their mouth. Slinkys were toys made to "walk" down your closest set of stairs. Who knew kids would start to use the Slinky as a rope from which to hoist their little brothers up to the highest treetop? Times have changed. So many toy accidents have taken place, it is now important to teach kids and grandparents the importance of toy safety. The most exciting thing about being a grandparent is watching grandchildren grow up happy and healthy. By becoming vigilantly aware shoppers, grandparents have the power to protect the grandchildren they love.

This article was written by Peggy Davis sponsored by

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Toys is a specialty toy store dedicated to researching, finding and selling only the highest quality wooden, plush and educational toys from all over the world. Article reproductions must include a link pointing to

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A complete guide for parents to choose the best toys for their children.

By Eugen Lisov

A complete guide for parents to choose the best toys for their children. by Eugen Lisov

Do you remember how it was when you were a child? What was your main activity? Was it working? Of course not. Your main activity was playing. You had no concerns. You needed toys and your parents were supposed to provide you with them. They had to find toys you wouldn't throw away and believe me, it wasn't easy for them.

Now you are a parent and you are in the same situation as your parents years ago. You're looking for toys that your child will like. That's why you must know how to choose the right toys. My parents made one common mistake: they would buy me toys that they considered wonderful. But usually, when they

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would give me the toy, I would either consider it too girlish or too boring. It wasn't fun for them to see how a toy they bought for me to play with would stay forgotten in my closet.

How to find out what's the right toy for your child?

Just watch your child closely to determine his preferred activities, skills level, preferred band(s) and movie(s), and so on. Based on these observations you can get a clue on what types of toys your child would prefer. For instance, if your child loves the movie Lord of the Rings, I bet that he'll also like Lord of the Rings toys...

Now don't just go into the first toy shop and buy the first

Lord of the Rings toy

you find. Observations

aren't enough. There are some other very important factors you must consider. Adding them into the equation helps ensure you that your child will have lots of fun with the toy you'll choose to buy for him.

Here are the factors you must consider when choosing toys for your child:

- Child's age - This is very important. If you buy toys too advanced for your child's age, chances are that he might get injured. Toy manufacturers struggle to make their products as safe as possible, but if you don't follow their recommendations, your child may suffer. On the other hand, if you buy toys made for children with age under that of your child, he will consider them too boring. The best thing is to choose toys designed precisely for your child's age. Here are two articles that will help you choose

toys

for babies

and

toys for toddlers

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- Child's gender - This is exactly what I said above that my parents bought me toys that I considered to be girlish. I'm a boy, but the same is with girls too. Any detail that may make the toy look as for the other gender than that of your child will make the toy undesired.

- Toys your child's friends play with - When your child is playing with his friends, watch to find out if he manifests interest in any of his playmate's toys. If he does, then it's very likely that he would like to have a toy similar the one his friend has.

- Sometimes, a child tells his parents what toy he likes or wants, thus saving them from a lot of hard work. But don't count on this. Some children aren't very keen to talk with parents unless they really want a certain toy.

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- Safety - This is the most important factor you must consider whenever you need to decide what toy you should buy for your child. Unfortunately, this is also the most overlooked one. Usually, parents forget to check if the toy they choose for their children are safe.

- Is the toy educational? - It's a good thing if the toys you choose for your child can help him develop new skills. You can take this guide to choose

educational toys for your child

And please remember that the age difference between you and your child is of at least 20 years. The fact that you liked a toy when you were a child does not mean that your child will love it too. Children from different generations like different types of toys

Make sure you offer the toy to your child in the appropriate manner!

When you offer the toy to your child, don't do it in a "Here's your toy. Now go and play with it" manner. If you do it this way, that toy won't mean a thing to your child. Rather, try to make a game. Hide the toy somewhere where the child can easily find it, and encourage him to look for it. Laugh with your child, search for it together... And when he finds the toy, don't just let him play by himself. Get involved in your child's play. Make that the fun of a lifetime. A parent is a child's first and best friend.

Eugen Lisov is the creator of

Child-Toys-Guide.com

, a site focused on helping parents worldwide to

choose the best toys for their children. If you offer your child a bad toy, it's the same as if you don't offer your youngster any toy. Please feel free to browse my site; it will only help you when choosing toys for your child.



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