

### **Choosing the Right Toys for Your Child**

Play is more than just entertainment for children. It is the way children discover the world around them, and develop the physical, mental, social, emotional, and creative skills needed to mature and thrive. Make sure the toys you choose are safe for your child, and appropriate for their age group. Below are some helpful suggestions for buying toys for your children.

- Consider introducing your children to "true toys" such as dolls, blocks, balls, etc. that allow children to use their imaginations. Too much detail takes away from the child's creativity. The best toys are often the cheapest-such as a large cardboard box that you and your child can together turn into a castle.
- Read to your child, beginning at an early age. This has been shown to be a key to the future success of every child.
- Provide a balance of organized activities and free play for children. The term 'play' means just that--unstructured, creative, play
- Understand that toys are never a substitute for parental attention.
- Remember that a good toy need not be expensive. Realize that it has never been demonstrated that a particular toy will facilitate child development.
- Use old picture books and magazines to play with your children. It's okay to tear them apart and make a collage
- Limit video game and computer game use to less than 1 to 2 hours a day, and never let a TV be located in the child's bedroom

### **Safety Issues**

- Young children should only be allowed to access to the Internet under adult supervision. Internet access should be through the living room only.
- Read toy labels carefully. They will help you choose age-appropriate and safe toys. Any toy intended for children age 3 to 6 is required to carry a warning if the toy contains small parts, small balls, marbles, or a balloon. Other toy labels to look for include "flame retardant/flame resistant" on fabric products, "surface or machine washable" on stuffed toys and dolls and "UL Listed" (for Underwriters Laboratories) on toys that operate on electricity.
- Check that the eyes and noses of stuffed animals and dolls are adequately secured. Choose rattles, teething rings, and squeeze toys of appropriate size. Avoid latex balloons, which can become a choking hazard.
- Once purchased, toys must be properly maintained to ensure safe play. Check toys routinely For cracks, sharp edges, or loose components. Remind your child to let you know when a toy is broken. Those that cannot be repaired should be discarded.
- Pay attention to news reports about recalled toys. A recent problem has been toys manufactured in China that are decorated with lead paint.
- Be extremely cautious when purchasing toys with components that fly or "shoot." Those toys usually have protective tips intended to prevent injury. However, if the tip becomes dislodged, it can cause injuries.
- Limit toys that produce unnecessarily loud noises, especially toy caps, noise-making guns, musical instruments, and other loud toys. Repeated exposure to loud noises can potentially damage a child's hearing.
- Keep toys designed for older children away from younger children.
- Electric toys and those with heating elements must be used under adult supervision, so as to avoid burns and electricity-related injuries.
- Store toys safely, and teach children to put toys away to avoid accidents.
- If you buy a bicycle for any age child, buy a helmet too, and make sure your child wears it. Point out that all riders in the Tour de France wear them.
- When purchasing arts and crafts supplies such as crayons and paint sets, look for the label "ASTM D-4236," which means the product has been reviewed for safety and is labeled with appropriate warnings where applicable.
- Trampolines should not be purchased. When two or more children bounce on the trampoline, there is no predicting where or when the child will be bounced off.