



Toy Features to Keep in Mind When Choosing Toys

Communicative

- **Amplification** – Toys that amplify or change a child’s voice. They motivate a child to use his own voice in a fun, and oftentimes, goofy way.
 - Megaphones
 - Microphones
- **Phonetic Component** – Toys that encourage the development of spoken words.
 - Flash cards that include phonics
 - Electronic toys that speak
- **Verbal Talk Back Response** – Allows children to develop the skill of language reception.
 - Electronic toys with clear, simple voices
- **Words** – Toys that included words that can be pointed to and spoken. Play by labeling actions or objects.
 - Books
 - Puzzles
 - Games
 - Electronic toys that include the alphabet and say the letter or word and allow a child to communicate in a verbal manner
- **Communication** – Toys that allow communication with others.
 - Phones
 - Walkie talkies
- **Pretend play** – Puppets help children who find it hard to speak out loud. The children can talk “through” the puppet, therefore it is not the child speaking, but rather the puppet.

Cognitive

- **Simple Design** – It creates a clear understanding of what the child is looking at. It makes the picture more concrete and less abstract. Simple designs allow children to digest the information at their own pace.
 - Puzzles with one color background
 - Simple pictures in books
 - Easy to understand gameboards
- **Short Game Duration** – Allows a child to feel the sense of accomplishment by completing a game start to finish.
 - Games that are quick in play or that have various modes of play are examples
- **One Concept** – Increases the sense of accomplishment and lessens confusion and frustration.
 - Flash cards that only work on one concept at a time



Toy Features to Keep in Mind When Choosing Toys ...*(continued)*

- Electronic educational toys that have the ability to play and learn one concept at a time (colors, shapes, numbers)
- **Concrete as opposed to abstract pretend play** – Children are able to understand the concept of the game or play easier if it is centered around something they are familiar with.
 - Puppets of people or real animals (rather than monsters or non-descript creatures)
 - Play school bus
 - Pretend play food
- **Clear cause and effect** – Children will learn correctly when their actions cause consistent responses.
 - Electronic toys that when you press a button, it activates lights and/or auditory response
 - Toys with levers to press or turn for an immediate response
- **Versatility** – A child may not be at the developmental level to do one activity with the toy, but would play with it differently if given the opportunity. Toys that have open-ended play potential will create a positive learning play experience for children and will assist in further development.
 - Stacking cups that can be stacked, or practice in and out, scoop and pour
 - Balls – throw, catch, roll, bounce
- **Repetition** – Children learn through repeating the same task over and over. Toys that allow for repetition give children opportunity to practice what they have learned.
 - Basketball hoops
 - Push button cause and effect toys
 - Electronic musical toys
- **Familiar characters** – Children will attend and be interested in products that have characters they know.
 - Books
 - Games
 - Plush
- **Talking** – Promote language development in children.
 - Dolls that talk
 - Cassette players with microphones
 - Books that have a sound component
- **Puzzles** (that have separate pieces, not interlocking) – Assists children in proper piece placement and problem solving skills to fit the piece in the correct space.



Toy Features to Keep in Mind When Choosing Toys ...*(continued)*

- **Picture cues** – Children learn visually how the world around them works and seeing a picture of the end result gives them assistance with how it should look.
 - Puzzles that have the same pictures on the piece and underneath
 - Lotto games matching identical pictures
 - Building and construction toys that include step by step pictorial instructions
- **Simple instructions** – Simple, concise wording in directions are easily understood and followed.
 - Games that have simple rules
 - Building or construction toys that have clear pictorial instructions to follow
 - Games that have few sequential steps
- **Levels of play/Variations** – Gives options for play. Children can start with an easier, beginner level and move toward a more difficult level of play.
 - Electronic toys that have several modes of play
 - Games with levels of play

Sensory

- **Various textures** – Gives children added stimulation and more exploration opportunities.
 - Hard, plastic rattles with bumps, grooves, etc.
 - Balls that have different tactile sensations and that are made of different hard or soft materials
 - Puzzles that have textures glued on the separate pieces
 - Activity quilts that have squares of different materials with different feels
- **Vibration** – Added stimulation, increased sensory input.
 - Hand massagers
 - Vibrating balls
- **Lights and Sounds** – Adds both auditory and visual stimulation to heighten the awareness and attentiveness of the child to the toy.
 - Balls that play music
 - Electronic toys that have lights that turn on/off, move, flash, blink*
 - Toys that have both sound and lights
 - Musical instruments
 - Musical keyboards
- **Raised buttons** – Assists children who have visual impairments to know where the activation switch is.
 - Electronic toys that have very apparent on/off buttons
- **Rattle** – Promote awareness of the object and maintain attention.
 - Toys that have beads or bells inside that move and create sound when played with
 - Rainsticks



Toy Features to Keep in Mind When Choosing Toys ...*(continued)*

- **Scented** – Added sensory input.
 - Scented crayons
 - Scented paints
 - Scented plastic toys (scented with a clear, identifiable scent, not of plastic)

- **Mouthable** – Children get sensory input and explore and learn about their surroundings by mouthing objects. Objects that children can put in their mouths.
 - Rattles
 - Plastic safe products that have different textures**

- **Adjustability** – Children may require different levels of sound or rhythm in order to fully enjoy a toy's appeal.
 - Electronic toys that have adjustable volume control
 - Musical toys that have adjustable tempo and tone

- **High Color Contrast** – Children are able to visually see an item more clearly if it is placed on a contrasting colored surface or if the toy itself has contrasting colors. Red, white and black are three that young children see first.
 - Rattles that have contrasting colors
 - Puzzles that have a solid background color for differentiation
 - Pattern books
 - Mobiles

- **Clear Outline** – Toys that have a visual or tactile outline that is easy for children to see or feel.
 - Puzzles that have a thick line around the objects
 - Raceway tracks that have a lip to follow
 - Books that have outlines of objects that can be traced with a finger

- **Shapes** – Children learn by feel and exploring with their hands.
 - Pegboards that have different shaped pegs for a child to feel the difference
 - Shape sorters with blocks to explore
 - Puzzles with different shaped pieces
 - Play food that is in identifiable shapes

***Warning:** Toys that blink or flash may instigate seizures in children who have a disorder prone to having seizures.

****Warning** – Avoid toys or products containing PVC as they can cause...



Toy Features to Keep in Mind When Choosing Toys ...*(continued)*

Physical

- **Suction cup bases** – For stability. These toys assist children who have involuntary movements. They will stay secured to the table, highchair, or wheelchair tray.
 - Rattles with suction cup bases
 - Balls and mitts that have many small suction cups on the catching surface and/or on the ball for increased success

- **Attachment straps** – The straps will hold the toy on a child's hand regardless of if that child has the physical ability to do so.
 - Mitts that have straps
 - Bells that have wrist straps
 - Rattles that strap around feet or hands
 - Toys that have straps to attach to a play surface (e.g. crib)

- **Enlarged handles** – Give children a larger area to grasp. Children can use a whole hand rather than needing refined fine motor skills.
 - Large handles on paint brushes
 - Large on/off buttons or levers
 - Large-sized drawing utensils (crayons, markers, pencils)
 - Large hitting area on bats
 - Large knobs on puzzles
 - Large keys on keyboards
 - Tall play pieces in board games

- **Hook and loop fasteners (i.e. Velcro)** – To secure the object in place. A child who has physical limitations may need assistance to grasp and hold items.
 - Rattles and musical instruments that have wrist straps
 - Catching mitts that have adjustable straps for hands
 - Cloth catching mitts and balls that have Velcro on catching surface

- **Trunk support** – Balance and support.
 - Ride-on toys that have high back and sides for support
 - Chairs that give a child support and that may have a seat belt or strap

- **Rubber or non-skid bottoms** – For stability, so the toy will not scoot away from the child.
 - Puzzles with rubberized bottoms
 - Toys that have rubber nubs or feet underneath
 - Activity houses with rubber bottoms



Toy Features to Keep in Mind When Choosing Toys ...*(continued)*

- **Various Textures** – Aid in exploration, increased sensory input and added stimulation.
 - Puzzles with materials glued on each piece
 - Rattles with hard plastic bumps and grooves
 - Balls with nubs, bristles, etc.

- **Sustained Action** – A child can work to activate and have time to refocus to enjoy what s/he has accomplished.
 - Keyboards – press one key and an entire song plays
 - Ball trackers – place the ball on top and watch as it follows through the track to the bottom
 - Spinning top – pump the top lever, release and watch it spin

- **Laminated Surfaces** – Easy clean-up, durability.
 - Game cards/playing cards
 - Lotto games
 - Flash cards
 - Books

- **Angled Play Surface** – For easy positioning and playing. Children will hold their heads and trunks up rather than collapsing down.
 - Keyboards with adjustable supports to raise and angle
 - Puzzle stand
 - Easel

- **Sounds and Lights Components** – Give additional sensory input and entertain a child who may have limited movements.
 - Musical balls
 - Light-up activities
 - Rattles with various sounds
 - Rain sticks
 - Keyboards
 - Sound Books
 - Instruments

- **Inflatable** – Toys that can be deflated slightly to a specific firmness for easy gripping.
 - Balls
 - Dolls

- **Mobility Assistants** – Allows a child to experience movement regardless of independent movement abilities.
 - Adult assist handles
 - Removable footrests



Toy Features to Keep in Mind When Choosing Toys ...*(continued)*

- **Large Openings** – Easy access for hands or bodies to maneuver through and retrieve items.
 - Large doorways on pretend play large houses
 - Large doorways, open roof or open sides for doll houses
 - Open top design for shape sorters
 - Buckets
 - Wide-set holes on lacing projects

- **Easy Manipulations** – Children who have physical disabilities may require an easier or lighter pressure or smaller movement to activate toys.
 - Keyboards that require a light touch to activate
 - Musical instruments that are easy to hold (possibly with straps to secure on to the child's hand)
 - Activity center with easy to move knobs and levers

- **Adjustable Height** – To adjust to meet the needs of a child sitting on the floor, kneeling, standing, sitting in a wheelchair.
 - Sports equipment (e.g. T-Ball, basketball nets)
 - Computer desk

- **Simple Art Projects** – An easy alternative for a child who has limited physical abilities to create elaborate pictures.
 - Sponge painting
 - Rubbing art
 - Stamps