



HELLO PARENTS,

Toys are more than just playthings; they should be fun, but also age-appropriate, stimulating, and safe. Well-chosen toys provide children with opportunities to have fun, learn, practice skills, solve problems, connect with others and grow emotionally. The best toys are often the simplest ones because they promote independence, critical thinking and creativity. In this newsletter, we will help you find toys that will encourage exploration, spark your child's imagination and provide hours of fun.

ACTIVITIES

INFANTS (3 -18 MONTHS)

Infants explore the world around them with their five senses. The best toys at this age are rattles, squeeze toys, teething toys and texture balls that stimulate sensory and fine motor development.

SOFT BLOCKS

MATERIALS:

- Different size soft blocks

DIRECTIONS:

- Place the soft blocks in your infant's play area.
- Encourage your child to explore the blocks.
- Observe how they play with the blocks: mouthing, grasping, squeezing, tossing or kicking. Older infants may attempt to stack the blocks and knock them over.
- Join your child in playing with the blocks and comment on their actions and discoveries.

[Click here](#) for more ideas.

TODDLERS (19 MONTHS – 2.5 YEARS)

Toddlers like to stack objects, hold them and move them around. They also like filling and dumping activities. Buckets, containers or bags as well as small objects to fill them will provide endless play opportunities for toddlers.

NESTING CUPS

MATERIALS:

- Nesting cups, for example a set of measuring cups

DIRECTIONS:

- Provide your child with a set of nesting cups.
- Observe your child while they explore the cups.
- You can also show your child that the cups fit inside each other.
- Extend your child's play by using the same cups in the bathtub, in the snow etc.
- Notice any other creative uses for the cups your child comes up with.

[Click here](#) for more ideas.

PRESCHOOLERS (2.5 – 5 YEARS)

Preschoolers like to build, play with puzzles, and use their imagination to pretend and create. They also enjoy using their fine motor skills. Blocks, matching and sorting sets, lacing beads, as well as dolls and dress-up clothes are great play things for preschoolers.

JENGA PARKING LOT

MATERIALS:

- Jenga blocks
- Cars and people
- Masking tape

DIRECTIONS:

- Encourage your child to build the parking lot for the cars using Jenga blocks.
- Have your child use the masking tape to create streets that lead cars to each parking spot.
- Encourage your child to figure out how to fit all the cars in their spaces.
- Your child may experiment with different designs and reorganize the parking lot multiple times.
- Join your child in their pretend play using toy cars and people.
- Follow your child's lead and acknowledge their ideas and contributions.

[Click here](#) for more ideas.

JK/SK (4 – 6 YEARS)

Kindergarten children are excited about their newly acquired academic skills. They also continue to enjoy imaginative play. Toys that benefit children at this age include number and alphabet sets, pretend play sets, blocks, puzzles and art materials.

RECYCLED MATERIALS AS TOYS

MATERIALS:

- Recycled materials: empty food boxes, bottles, containers, etc.
- Grocery flyers
- Cardboard

- Glue
- Paper
- Scissors
- Marker
- Shallow containers or baskets

DIRECTIONS:

- Discuss with your child how recycled materials, such as empty food boxes, bottles, containers, can be used for play.
- Choose one idea and collect appropriate recycled materials. For example, collect items that could be used playing a grocery store.
- Encourage your child to look through the grocery flyers and cut out pictures of different produce.
- Paste the pictures onto cardboard and cut them out.
- Place these items in a container or basket.
- Ask your child to make play money from paper.
- Help your child set up a pretend store with the collected items and the produce that they made.
- Follow your child's lead and imagination to "shop" at the grocery store and take turns to be a cashier and a shopper.
- In the future, encourage your child to create a different pretend play setting with recycled materials. For example: a kitchen, a doctor's office, a book store, etc.

[Click here](#) for more ideas.

SCHOOL-AGERS (6 – 12 YEARS)

School-age children want to explore, invent, create and master skills. Their interests become more sophisticated, and their abilities and hobbies may lead to becoming a collector or a master in a specific area of interest. Toys such as card and board games, art and crafts kits, computer and video games, outdoor sporting equipment, and experiment kits can create educational experiences for school-age children, and help them develop their unique talents.

DIY BOARD GAME

MATERIALS:

- Cardboard or a sturdy poster board
- Markers
- Small figurines or objects that can be used as tokens
- Dice
- Paper
- Pen

DIRECTIONS:

- Brainstorm with your friends or family to decide on a theme for your board game. For example: adventure, space, animals, movie characters, etc.
- Draw the game board starting with a simple curvy path with squares for each space.
- Mark "Start" and "Finish" on each end of the path.
- Discuss with your friends or family the basic rules for the game and write them down in point-form. For example, decide together how you want to move the pieces or how to win the game.
- Use the figurines or tokens and dice to play the game.
- Take turns to roll the dice and move your figurines.
- After you have played this simple board game a few times, add some challenges along the way to increase the game's complexity. For example, some squares along the path on the board may say "lose a turn" or "roll again", etc.
- When you create your own board game, you learn how to think logically and creatively, as well as to plan and solve problems.

[Click here](#) for more ideas.



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A TIP FOR TODAY

- Select toys that encourage logical thinking, problem solving and creativity, such as blocks.
- Pick toys that match your child's current interests and abilities.
- Look for toys that are open-ended and can be used in a variety of ways, such as containers, dolls or art materials.
- Choose toys that spark imagination and provide opportunities for pretend play, such as dress-up clothes, small animals and people.
- Look for toys that promote social skills and collaborative play, such as board and card games or sports toys.
- Seek out toys that encourage exploration of the real world, such as a bug-catching kit, magnifying glass, digging tools and buckets.
- Provide your child with beautiful, good quality and interesting books at any age.
- Make sure your child has access to art materials appropriate to their developmental abilities.