A Consumer's Guide for Selecting Suitable Toys

AGES SIX THROUGH TWELVE

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Play is a natural activity for every young child Play provides many opportunities for children to learn and grow—physically, mentally and socially If play is the child's work then toys are the child's tools, and appropriate toys can help children do their work well

This booklet offers suggestions for selecting suitable toys for children **6 to 12 years of age.** It was prepared by the U S Consumer Product Safety Commission, the government agency that is charged with protecting the public against unreasonable risks of injury associated with consumer products

A parent or friend choosing a toy for a child must consider several things A good toy should be

- appealing and interesting to the child,
- suited to the child's physical capabilities,
- suited to the child's mental and social development,
- well constructed, durable and safe for that child's age

This booklet provides some guidelines to help in selecting toys that meet these criteria The suggestions in this booklet are based on three sources (1) review of reference works on child development, (2) observations of children at play, and (3) product analysis of toys to determine which characteristics are most critical in defining the appropriate ages of the intended users of toys

This booklet is organized in the following way. Brief general outlines of childrens' **ABILITIES AND INTERESTS** are followed by categorized **TOY LISTS** for each of five age groups

The two age groups are
Primary school children (ages, 6, 7 and 8)
Older school children (ages 9, 10, 11, & 12)

ABILITIES AND INTERESTS sections list physical, mental and social abilities and interests for each age that are particularly relevant to selecting appropriate toys Note that these lists indicate average development—the age range at which the "average" child can be expected to achieve a particular skill or develop a specific interest. The ages in the text are only approximate Children develop skills at uneven rates—any one child may be "above average" in one skill and "below average" in another skill For an individual child, the parent is the best judge of the child's abilities and interests at any point in his or her development, and should select toys suitable for that child's profile of capabilities

TOY LIST sections give toy suggestions in six major categories with subcategories under each to help in finding a particular toy type. The major categories and subcategories are listed on the following page Note that these sections do not constitute a comprehensive list of all toy products that might be suitable for a particular age They do suggest general toy types suitable for that age group This booklet does **not** judge the play value or benefits of specific toys For example, suitable types of

projectile toys are described in the **TOY LISTS,** although the potential safety hazards of these toys lead many in the field to recommend against them

ALL TOYS (a general category orienting the consumer to special features of toys that are relevant to the particular age group)

ACTIVE PLAY
- Push and Pull Toys
- Ride-On Toys
- Outdoor and Gym Equipment
- Sports Equipment

MANIPULATIVE PLAY
- Construction Toys
- Puzzles
- Pattern-Making Toys
- Manipulative Toys
- Dressing, Lacing and Stringing Toys
- Sand and Water Play Toys

MAKE-BELIEVE PLAY
- Dolls
- Stuffed Toys
- Puppets
- Role Play Materials
- Play Scenes
- Transportation Toys
- Projectile Toys

CREATIVE PLAY (Arts, Crafts and Music)
- Musical Instruments
- Art and Craft Materials
- Audio-Visual Equipment

LEARNING PLAY
- Games
- Specific Skill Development Toys
- Books

TOY SAFETY. A major area of consideration for all toys is the durability and safety of the toys Toys should be constructed to withstand the uses and abuses of children in the age range for which the toy is appropriate.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has set safety regulations for certain toys Manufacturers must design and manufacture their products to meet these regulations so that hazardous products are not sold In addition, many toy manufacturers also adhere to the toy industry's voluntary safety standards

What the Government Does:

Mandatory Toy Safety Regulations

For All Ages

- No shock or thermal hazards in electrical toys
- Amount of lead in toy paint severely limited
- No toxic materials in or on toys
- Art materials used by children under 12 should be non-hazardous and indicate they conform with ASTM D-4236
- Latex balloons and toys and games with latex balloons must be labeled warning of the choking and suffocation hazards associated with pieces of and uninflated balloons

Under Age 3

- Unbreakable—will withstand use and abuse.
- No small parts or pieces which could become lodged in the throat
- Infant rattles large enough not to become lodged in child's throat and constructed so as not to separate into small pieces.
- No balls with diameters 1 75 inches or less

For Ages 3 through 6

- All toys and games with small parts must be labeled to warn of the choking hazard to young children.

For 3 years and older

- The following toys must be labeled to warn of the choking hazard to young children
  - All balls and toys and games with balls with a diameter 1.75 inches or less, and
  - All marbles and toys and games with marbles

Under Age 8

- No electrically operated toys with heating elements
- No sharp points on toys
- No sharp edges on toys

CPSC also can remove from the marketplace toys presenting hazards not covered by the regulations

What the Industry Does:

Voluntary Standard for Toy Safety

- Puts age and safety labels on toys
- Puts warning labels on crib gyms advising that they be removed from the crib when babies can get up on hands and knees (to prevent strangling)
- Makes squeeze toys and teethers large enough so as not to become lodged in an infant's throat
- Assures that the lid of a toy chest will stay open in any position to which it is raised and not fall unexpectedly on a child
- Limit string length on crib and playpen toys to reduce the risk of strangulation.

What a Parent Can Do:

Reduce Choking Risk

- Look for and read age and safety labels Any toy that is age labeled for children three years and older should be kept away from children under the age of three — such toys **may** have small parts and **could** cause choking if placed in the mouth.
- Keep uninflated balloons and broken balloon pieces away from children.

- Rounded and oval objects (e g , balls, marbles, etc) that fit easily into a child's mouth may be difficult to remove from a throat and could cause choking.

Reduce Strangulation Risk

- Crib toys with strings, cords, ribbons, etc (used to hang toys across a crib or to the side of a crib) present a strangulation risk when babies are just starting to push up on hands and knees, usually about 5 months of age **REMOVE ALL CRIB TOYS WHICH ARE STRUNG ACROSS CRIB OR PLAYPEN AREA WHEN BABIES BEGIN TO PUSH UP ON HANDS AND KNEES OR ARE 5 MONTHS OF AGE, WHICHEVER OCCURS FIRST.**

General Toy Safety

- Keep toys intended for older children away from younger children — such toys may injure young children.

- Check all toys periodically for breakage and potential hazards — damaged or dangerous toys should be repaired or thrown away immediately.

- Store toys safely — teach children to put toys away so they are not tripping hazards; check toy boxes and shelves for safety.

For further information write to the:

U.S Consumer Product Safety Commission
Washington, D C 20207

Or call the toll-free hotline:

To report a toy related complaint, call the toll-free hotline:

1-800-638-CPSC

Where To Find Toys Suitable for Your Child:

- If your child is age 6, 7, or 8 years, go to page 6

- If your child is age 9, 10, 11, or 12 years, go to page 11

ABILITIES AND INTERESTS

Primary School Age 6, 7 and 8 Years

PHYSICAL

- large muscle abilities and interests include jumprope, hopscotch, stunts and climbing (trees, trapeze), ice skating, roller skating, riding bicycle, water sports, ball play (but most not ready for competitive team sports)
- small muscle abilities and interests include. printing, drawing with pencils, simple sewing (can sew straight line), simple carpentry (can saw straight line), weaving, braiding, string small beads, cutting out paper dolls, jigsaw puzzles
- will practice in target games or to improve a skill

MENTAL

- interest in reading, spelling and printing activities and games
- interest in simple arithmetic activities and games, and in time, calendars, weights, value of coins
- interest in nature and in simple science activities and experiments
- interest in collecting things and in hobbies
- interest in the line between fantasy and reality—likes magic and "tricks"
- interest in producing finished products (art, models, crafts, sewing, carpentry)
- beginning interest in other times and other places

SOCIAL

- great interest in the peer group and in "belonging"—enjoys special friends, cliques, gangs, secret languages and passwords
- prefers to play with same sex peers
- great increase in ability to play cooperatively with others—enjoys group activities
- interest in "fair play" and living up to standards (own and group's standards of excellence)
- continues interest in dramatic play (puppets, dolls, paper dolls, dress-ups, war games, cowboys and Indians, cops and robbers, space games)—by age 8 increased interest in producing shows and plays
- beginning interest in the wider community

TOYS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE—6, 7, AND 8 YEARS

ALL TOYS	ACTIVE PLAY	MANIPULATIVE PLAY
Child primarily interested in goal rather than means or process Experimentation becomes increasingly "scientific" Child less dependent on concrete object for concept Child can • sort and classify using more than one criterion • increasingly make use of reading, writing and simple arithmetic in games and toys • do simple sewing, weaving, braiding, ceramics, jewelry kits—has greatly increased fine motor control • use simple mechanical toys (cars, trains) Child is interested in • time and seasons and in toys marking time • collections of things • line between fantasy and reality (likes tricks and magic and disguise kits) • producing products in arts, crafts, woodworking etc	**Push and Pull Toys** *not suited to age group* **Ride-On Toys** two-wheeled bike (sized to child—child should be able to straddle male bike with both feet on ground) push scooters battery-powered ride-ons **Outdoor and Gym Equipment** complex gym sets with rings, bars, swings, ropes, rope ladders, slides complex climbing structures jump ropes	**Construction Toys** large sets of blocks or bricks (80-100 pieces) construction sets (wood, plastic, metal)—complex, can manipulate tiny nuts and screws sets with motorized parts complex gear systems can copy or build models following instructions—prefer sets that produce realistic models **Puzzles** jigsaws (50-100 pieces) three-dimensional puzzles map puzzles more complex tangrams **Pattern Making Toys** design/pattern toys various types of materials to produce products • wood • plastic • paper • cardboard • beads • ceramic tiles

TOYS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE—6, 7, AND 8 YEARS (Cont'd)

ALL TOYS	ACTIVE PLAY	MANIPULATIVE PLAY
• kits (science, craft, models) and can follow simple directions • adult roles and likes realistic costumes and props for character play • rudiments of sports and skill development Children show increasing variation in interest and abilities Reading interests vary but child beginning to be able to use dictionary Beginning of interest in giving "shows" Great interest in "fairness" but hates to lose and will cheat to win in games Toys should have no sharp points or edges No electrical parts without adult supervision	**Sports Equipment** regular baseball bat and ball basketball (junior size for ages 6, 7) soccer regular flying disks adult-sized football roller and ice skates ski equipment hockey equipment badminton equipment ping pong (age 8) horseshoes croquet sleds, including ones with steering mechanisms and handbrakes toboggans simple swimming and underwater equipment	• cloth • block printing kits to produce design products **Manipulative Toys** complex lock boxes balance scales (5-7 years) small number rods and blocks math models—illustrating concepts like fractions and arithmetic mechanical models—levers, pulleys, pendulums, etc **Dressing, Lacing, and Stringing Toys** stringing beads of any size, including pottery, glass, or other fragile beads simple sewing, weaving, braiding making simple clothes for doll jewelry kits, spool knitting, sewing kits, handloom, braiding materials **Sand and Water Play Toys** working models of boats elaborate sailboats realistic working boats battery-operated boats remote-control boats sandbox tools and molds of all sizes

TOYS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE—6, 7, AND 8 YEARS

MAKE-BELIEVE PLAY	CREATIVE PLAY (arts, crafts, music)	LEARNING PLAY
Dolls likes lots of accessories, clothes and special equipment big baby dolls or dolls of own age, fashion dolls and teenage dolls, collector dolls, hair cutting dolls, paper dolls, fantasy character dolls/action figures, doll house dolls **Stuffed Toys** small collectible toys large, floppy stuffed toys (some interest in oversized animals) very realistic toys replicas of famous animals unusual, unique stuffed toys **Puppets** puppet theater with curtains and scenery soft hand puppets, rod puppets, puppets with arms, jointed puppets **Role-Play Materials** wall and hand mirrors realistic accessories for role play that really work adult role dress-ups and elaborate make-up	**Musical Instruments** rhythm instruments learning to play real instrument and read music may be interested in formal music lessons (piano, autoharp, ukulele, recorder, violin, horn) age 7 or 8 may be interested in formal dance lessons (girls especially) (ballet, modern dance, tap dancing, folk dancing, acrobatics) at about age 8 **Art and Craft Materials** crayons, paint, markers, pencils pastels and art chalks variety of papers and more complex coloring books sketch pads all art papers construction paper and cardboards all glues except dangerous ones regular scissors clay—oil-based and self-hardening plaster of paris stencils papier mache	**Games** simple strategy and rule games such as dominoes, marbles, race games, card games, strategy games, checkers, Chinese checkers, word games, bingo, arithmetic games (simple adding or subtracting games), rummy, simple spelling games, simple quiz games, simple guessing or deduction games, games based on familiar characters, games with fantasy or adventure themes **Specific Skill Development Toys** conceptual models—human body, physical world, stars, space, moon science kits chemistry set, science models, weather kit calculator (simple arithmetic functions) clocks and watches balance and other scales protractor microscope telescope/field binoculars toy or simple real typewriter

TOYS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE—6, 7, AND 8 YEARS (Cont'd)

MAKE-BELIEVE PLAY	CREATIVE PLAY (arts, crafts, music)	LEARNING PLAY
magic and disguise kits props for dramatic play (store, school, library, office, war games, robots, space, etc) cooking and sewing equipment that really works **Play Scenes** doll houses (number of rooms, stories, special furniture and dolls)—interested in minute detail models with more grown-up themes (space, military toy soldiers) **Transportation Toys** little vehicles (3-4 inches) particularly preferred—collectible vehicles large-scale realistic trucks, planes, etc with working parts elaborate wood or metal train sets electric trains (8-9 years) simple remote control vehicles electric racing cars **Projectile Toys** action figures (5-7 inches) with projectile weapons guns that shoot ping-pong balls or soft darts helicopter-type projectiles water pressure rockets (8+ years)	looms (heddle and looper) knitting spool leatherwork kits jewelry-making kits bead/braiding kits sewing kits with needles mosaic tile kits jewelry/copper/enameling kits more complete woodworking tools (with adult supervision) beginning photography—real camera model airplane, other kits **Audio-Visual Equipment** record or tape player to run by self (not too fragile) radio blank tapes to make own recordings more complex stories and books on records or tape folk songs introduction to orchestra records fast dancing (such as folk dancing) records	more complex printing sets more complex video and computer games (checkers and chess programs—age 7 and older—and some target games) electronic/computer teaching games • arithmetic • drawing/graphics • story writing • word processing • simple programming concepts • music writing **Books** developing individual reading preferences common interests childhood classics myths, legends biographies poetry fairy tales dictionaries (age appropriate) books about children, animals, nature, space, planes, electricity, magic

ABILITIES AND INTERESTS—

Older School Age 9, 10, 11 and 12 Years

PHYSICAL

- sports important to both sexes—this age range is ready for athletic and team sports riding (bicycle and horseback), skating, swimming, sailing, tennis, fishing, and a variety of ball games including baseball and soccer
- enjoys dexterity games pick-up sticks, marbles, jacks, darts, ring toss, tiddlywinks
- can make complex constructions and models, and do jigsaw puzzles of 100 to 1000 pieces
- interested in a variety of arts and crafts—small muscle ability is essentially that of an adult by age 10
- may be interested in formal music, dance and art or craft lessons

MENTAL

- able to play and carry out activities on own
- emergence of independent critical thinking—evaluates ideas and people—may be interested in biographies and history
- increased individual differences in abilities and interests
- may be interested in science—increasing ability to arrange, classify and generalize
- may enjoy hobbies, collections, or scrapbooks
- interest in stories or plays, and acting in them
- interest in gadgets and inventions (including computers)

SOCIAL

- can work cooperatively with others and is interested in clubs and in group activities and productions
- can play complex card and table games with rules—begins to be able to lose gracefully
- enjoys competitive games and sports
- interest in drama and dramatic games (charades, gestures)
- growing interest in the larger community and the world

TOYS FOR OLDER SCHOOL AGE—9, 10, 11 AND 12 YEARS

ALL TOYS	ACTIVE PLAY	MANIPULATIVE PLAY
Great increase in individual differences in abilities and interests—may be interested in • reading (and in specific kinds of books) • science (with some specific interest like chemistry or astronomy) • computers (some like to make their own programs) • hobbies • crafts (skill approaches adult level by age 12) • building models • collections (some become serious collectors and many enjoy small collections) • formal training in arts (music, drama, drawing) or specific crafts (pottery, weaving, carpentry, sewing, etc) • producing shows or plays (live actors, animals, puppets, etc) • both sexes now enjoy athletics and/or competitive sports, but specific interests vary—child may be interested in formal training in some athletic skill	**Pushing and Pulling Toys** *not suited to age group* **Ride-On Toys** two-wheeled bicycle (can usually manage adult size by 11 or 12 and can manage a bicycle with geared speeds) battery-powered ride-ons (many can manage gearshifts) (12-year-olds not yet ready to handle motorized ride-ons that require consistent judgment about speed, safety, etc) **Outdoor and Gym Equipment** complex gym sets with rings, bars, swings, ropes, rope ladders, slides (many children getting too big for average size of home sets) complex climbing structures jumpropes some like weightlifting	**Construction Toys** large sets of blocks or bricks (at least 80-100 pieces) construction sets (wood/plastic/metal)—can put together complex parts, manipulate tiny nuts and screws, and follow directions sets with motorized parts complex gear systems can copy or build models following instructions—prefer sets that produce realistic models **Puzzles** jigsaw puzzles • age 8-10, 100-500 pieces • age 10+, 500-2000 pieces three-dimensional puzzles complex tangrams **Pattern-Making Toys** great increase in design skills in this age range design or pattern work in virtually any medium (wood, plastic, paper, cardboard, cloth, tiles, beads, etc) kits to produce design products design interest merges into arts and crafts interests

TOYS FOR OLDER SCHOOL AGE—9, 10, 11 AND 12 YEARS (Cont'd)

ALL TOYS	ACTIVE PLAY	MANIPULATIVE PLAY
Fine motor abilities begin to approach that of an adult—may enjoy dexterity games, complex constructions, or puzzles Interested in more complex table games and enjoys strategy and competition—can now stick to the rules and lose gracefully	**Sports Equipment** baseball, basketball and soccer equipment (regular size) football (regular size) flying disks (regular size) roller and ice skates ski equipment hockey equipment sleds with steering mechanisms and hand brakes toboggans croquet sets ping pong sets horseshoe sets badminton equipment tennis equipment golf equipment swimming and underwater equipment	**Manipulative Toys** may enjoy producing or manipulating • math models • mechanical models • science models (of body, stars, planets, etc) • simple physics models **Dressing, Lacing, Stringing Toys** stringing beads of any size or material many skills such as sewing now becoming crafts may enjoy • simple to complex handlooms • jewelry making kits • knitting kits • needlepoint kits • leather sewing kits • leather and plastic braiding kits **Sand and Water Play Toys** can operate small real boats with adult supervision (sailboats, rafts, canoes) elaborate model boats, including gas powered boats (with supervision) remote control boats

TOYS FOR OLDER SCHOOL AGE—9, 10, 11 AND 12 YEARS

MAKE-BELIEVE PLAY	CREATIVE PLAY (arts, crafts, music)	LEARNING PLAY
Dolls dolls are increasingly decorative pieces or hobbies preference for lots of accessories interest in careers (dolls with roles) may enjoy fashion dolls/teenage dolls, costume dolls, collector dolls, dollhouse or miniature dolls, haircutting dolls, dolls representing familiar characters, fantasy/action characters **Stuffed Toys** small collectible toys large, floppy stuffed toys (some interest in oversized animals) very realistic toys replicas of famous animals (may have particular love of horses, dogs, cats, bears, etc) unusual, unique stuffed toys **Puppets** can manipulate puppet theater, curtains and scenery interested in scripted puppet plays may enjoy hand puppets, puppets on rods, stringed marionettes **Role-Play Materials** mirrors (used in adult way)	**Musical Instruments** may be interested in real instruments (piano, autoharp, ukulele, children's sousaphone, recorder, violin, horn, etc) and formal lessons may be interested in formal dance lessons (ballet, modern dance, tap dancing, folk dance, acrobatics) may be interested in songbooks and group singing **Art and Craft Materials** age 10-13—formal art lessons following interest crayons, paints, markers, pencils, art chalks, casein paints variety of papers, sketch pads, art papers and cardboards very complex coloring/design books stencils papier mache all glues except dangerous ones regular scissors clay (oil-based, self-hardening, pottery clay) plaster of paris	**Games** now likes games requiring speed, dexterity, strategy, competition, extended concentration labyrinth games, chess, cardgames, more complex math games, complex detection games, word games/spelling games, quiz games, dominoes, checkers, Chinese checkers, bingo, marbles, parcheesi, theme and strategy games **Specific Skill Development Toys** conceptual models (human body, physical world, stars, space, moon) science kits (chemistry sets, science models, weather kits) microscope telescope field binoculars protractor clocks, watches, stopwatches calculators standard typewriter (can learn to type) more complex video games including target games

TOYS FOR OLDER SCHOOL AGE—9, 10, 11 AND 12 YEARS (Cont'd)

MAKE-BELIEVE PLAY	CREATIVE PLAY (arts, crafts, music)	LEARNING PLAY
dolls and role play leads to sewing (for dolls), real cooking, dramatic games (characters, etc) and real dramatics (making up or giving plays) dolls, doll houses, toy soldiers, scale model toys may become hobbies child may like real cooking and sewing equipment make-up and disguise kits, props, adult clothes and costumes for plays and dramatics **Play Scenes** elaborate doll houses (may become hobby) may be interested in collections or hobbies with toy soldiers, forts, robots, etc **Transportation Toys** remote control vehicles electric trains electric racing cars gas-powered toy cars (11-12 years) (with adult supervision) **Projectile Toys** water pressure rockets guns that shoot smaller projectiles cork guns (11+ years) BB guns (with adult supervision—11+ years) combustion rockets (12 years) (with adult supervision, 11+ years)	age 10-13 formal craft lessons following interest can learn and use (lessons and kits) real sewing, knitting, embroidery, needlepoint, crocheting working (simple) sewing machines weaving (heddle or looper loom) clay modeling/pottery/ceramics jewelry making (beads, enamels, shells) printing leather work and leather braiding photography as art (real equipment) woodburning more complex woodworking basket making kite making puppet making (and other crafts and skills) **Audio-Visual Equipment** record or tape player to run by self (if not too complex or fragile) blank tapes to make own recordings story and book records/tapes individual preferences in music— some like popular music classical music folk music musical comedy music	computers with. game-generating computer programs word processing programs typing programs (age 10 and up) drawing/graphics programs special-subject programs spelling, vocabulary, grammar, chemical elements, economics, history, geography, ecology, political science, programs to teach programming **Books** great individual differences in amount and type of reading preferred some like childhood classics, myths and legends; biographies, poetry, mysteries, westerns, adventure; fantasy, science fiction; science, information books, anthologies; books about animals (especially horses), books about sports; dictionaries (age appropriate) some prefer specific types of books or books by a specific author

For further information, write

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
Washington, D.C. 20207

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