

Playing with Toys and Kids

Presented by Faith Golden MA

Shopping for appropriate toys is a parenting skill, one every parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle and friend should learn. If you don't learn this you will spend money on inappropriate toys that have no developmental value and can even be dangerous.

Before buying any toy, it needs to be **safe, non-toxic, well made and developmentally appropriate** for the child you are buying it for. Manufacturers give information regarding the age group their toy is meant for, but only *you* know if the child you are buying the toy for is developmentally ready for the toy. Ask yourself if the child can play with the toy in more than one way and if the toy can be used for a long period of time (such as blocks.) A toy that will be played with for a long time, is educational and has many different uses may be more expensive but is cost effective.



This list is not a complete list of all the toys and ways to play with toys and kids. I think that list might go on forever. Never the less, this list is to give you some ideas then let you come up with your own ideas of playing with toys and kids. Most of the toys on the list can be used from birth to 36-months. A lot of items on the list are made from items found in your home and so is no cost. The toys you buy should have multiple developmental purposes and use across ages to get the most toy for your money. Your child doesn't need a room full of toys to make him happy; he needs you to provide a caring one-to-one relationship with him so he can enjoy interacting with his environment including toys.

Birth to 12 Month-old Toys

Birth to 12 months is a time of rapid brain development. It is a time when the synapses in the brain make the most connections. In order for the baby's brain to achieve maximum growth, infants need to have all of their senses stimulated in their interactions with their parents, caregivers (I'll use parents to represent caregivers, grandparents, etc.) and the environment. In the beginning, an infant needs their parent to interact with them and the toy (shake the rattle, rub the textures on their face, make the sound with the rattle) for the toy to be effective. The parent alone is an endless source of interactions for baby. Every time the parent sings, holds, touches, talks to, smells different, etc., the baby is exposed to new experiences and interactions that cause their brain to grow and develop. Please don't buy electronic toys! This doesn't include every toy or activity that a parent will or can use to play with their child.

Toys and Play for Baby:

- Mobile: Should be black and white for the first 3 months then change to other colors after 3 months.
- Rattles: Your child will hold these, put them in his mouth to teeth on, listen to them, look at them, use them to switch from one hand to the other, drop on the floor and more



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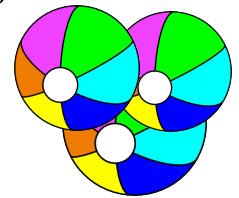
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- Stacking rings and cups: mouth dump off the post chew on, play hide and go seek games
- Activity Gym: look at, listen to, reach toys, bat toys, turn to, interchangeable toys (can be homemade)
- Cloths of any texture to rub on baby's face and hands and play peek-a-boo with
- Balls and rolling toys such as cars and trucks : listen to, see, smell, crawl after, and throw into baskets....
- Soft washable dolls and animals: touch, mouth, chew on, hear, smell, bat at, grab, swat, hug
- Beach ball-medium size: roll on forward and back and side to side for balance
- Books: read from, point out pictures, and learn names of things...
- Bubbles: eye-hand coordination, language, fun
- Jack in the Box: cause and effect, music, waiting
- Homemade shakers: Use small plastic jars filled with rice, beans etc.; baby will learn different sounds, weight, visual discrimination, smell
- Maracas or shakers: moving to a beat, dancing to and enjoying music
- Wooden spoons, metal and plastic bowls: different sounds and movements
- Scarf and paper towel tube: hand-eye coordination, object permanence, fine motor
- Busy Box Pop-up: fine motor skills, object permanence, hand-eye
- Push toy: (preferably one that can be used as something else such as a shape sorter) or your child can push a full laundry basket or ottoman with parent on the other side offering resistance, so it doesn't go to fast
- Pillows: create an obstacle course made of different size pillows (add a tunnel if you have one) with or without playing "I'm gonna get you"
- Rhymes and songs with hand motions and clapping games:
Learn them and play them often. Your baby will ask to play more as young as 2 months. Watch for the signal.
- Wide mouth plastic jar: put things in it for baby to dump out
- Play in rice, flour and oatmeal; they like the texture and smell. Give them spoons to spoon the material into cups. **Warning use Gluten free flour and oatmeal for GF adults and kids**
- Large sheet or parachute: Being swung in a sheet is great for balance and the vestibular system.
- Small balls and a bowl or large pot: Drop small balls into bowl or pot; small and gross motor as well as hand-eye coordination



Buy good quality toys that will last with bright contrasting colors, lots of different textures, different sounds and smells. Read the labels to be sure the toy is non-toxic. Make sure there are no small pieces baby could swallow and no batteries.

Avoid DVD's and any screens. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Speech-Language- Hearing Association both recommend no screens for children under 24 months.

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Twelve to 24 Months

Toys for this age group should have no batteries or screens. Your baby is on the go, so make sure to baby proof. Give your baby a cabinet or drawer in the kitchen with safe kitchen things to play with. Keep toys stored in clear plastic shoeboxes with photo labels for easy cleanup and later sorting. Look for toys that can be played with in different ways that promote physical, cognitive, language, social/emotional and self-help skills. Many toys and things from the Birth to 12-month group are appropriate for this age.

Toys and Activities for Toddlers:

- Books: May have more words now teach words and language
- Soft doll or animal: for self-help and social skills
- Full Laundry Basket, ottoman or push toy: to assist in walking
- Small towel for peek-a-boo or for hiding toys: for cognitive and language development
- Rhymes with hand movements and clapping games: continue old ones and add more complicated ones: social skills, speech and language and fine motor
- Stacking cups, blocks and tower: Hand-eye coordination is improved as are cognitive skills, may be able to stack the cups or blocks with help
- Pillows and tunnel: Obstacle course can be more complicated now: gross motor and language
- Kitchen items: for musical instruments and imaginative play: language, gross and fine motor, self-help and rhythm
- Scarf in a tube: discovery, imagination, speech and language, cognitive
- Pop-up Busy Box: Still fun and strengthens fine motor muscles, repetition, cognitive
- Wide mouth plastic jar: for dumping out and putting in
- Rice, flour and oatmeal; their hand/eye coordination is better and so are their pouring skills. Add small spoons for fine motor coordination. **Warning use Gluten free flour and oatmeal for GF adults and kids.**
- Sheet or Parachute: for going under playing ball toss and other games promote gross motor, fine motor, self-help and social skills
- Cause and effect toys: Toys that are manipulated to make something happen are for cognitive, fine motor, discovery, language and self-help skills



Toys and Activities to add:

- Homemade books: texture book, photo album of family and friends and more for language, social skills, fine motor
- Community Member hats: Pretend community people, social skills, speech/language
- Plastic jars with removable lids: to open and close (fine motor skills)
- Blocks: cardboard, soft, wood: cognitive, small and gross motor, speech/language, imagination (Wood blocks under close supervision only)



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- Kitchen items: for pretend play, fine motor, social skills, speech/ language, self-help
- Fat or triangle crayons and paper: fine motor, cognitive, language, social/emotional and self-help skills
- Shape sorters: cognitive skills, eye-hand, fine motor, colors, shapes
- Nature: language, cognitive, classification, colors, smell, texture, for art and much more
- Puppets: language, speech, cognitive, fine motor, social/emotional and self-help
- Farm and other animal: care taking, fine motor, social/emotional and self-help
- Magnetic items, magnifying glass: and other science things: cognitive, fine motor, social/emotional, self help, discovery, cause and effect and more
- Doctor kit: social skills, self-help, discovery, cognitive, pretend, family-life skills and more



Twenty four to 36 Month Olds

At this age, children are more sure of their bodies and interested in naming their body parts. Kids this age are active practicing running, jumping, and riding toys. Their eye-hand skills have improved to the point where they can throw and catch a medium sized ball. They are now able to sort and classify objects by one element, such as shape, size or color. They can open and close a jar, color and paint. They like to be with their peers but play next to them, not with them. Don't expect children this age to share.

Toys and Activities for two to 3 year olds:

- Read books: together and separately
- Stacking Rings: to stack the rings in size order and name colors
- Small balls to throw into a basket, bowl, and trashcan
- Medium size ball: Throw, catch and kick
- Rice, flour and oatmeal: is fun for everyone. Warning use Gluten free flour and oatmeal for GF adults and kids
- Rhymes and songs with hand motions and clapping games:
- Nesting cups or blocks-your child may be able to nest or stack them now
- Tunnel: crawling through and going through an obstacle course is a great gross motor activity, it helps to connect both hemispheres of the brain and prepares children to read.
- Wooden spoons, metal and plastic bowls are always great fun for music and pretend play
- Scarf in a tube: magic anyone!
- Preschoolers still love to play with their Pop-Up busy box
- Pillows are always great for crawling over or making a fort



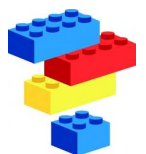
New games and things to add:

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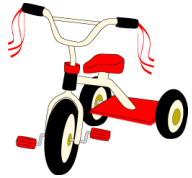
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- Stringing beads: will small beads and lacing cards for small motor and eye-hand coordination
- Duplo type building bricks: build imagination and small motor skills
- Music and scarfs: are great rhythm and movement activities
- Circle games and rhymes: if you have a few people are great for social skills, rhythm and movement
- Play with water and sand: (when no longer putting things in mouth otherwise stick to flour rice and oatmeal) **WARNING: not for Gluten Free Kids**
- Dress up clothes: are great for pretending and working out what they see at home, such as parents going to work, new sibling etc.
- Surprise bag: identifying objects by touch is a great cognitive skill activity
- Play with non-toxic modeling clay: builds fine motor skills, imagination, sensory skills, working with tools etc.
- Sorting socks, folding towels, dusting with Mom or Dad: builds language, cooperation, self-help skills
- Explore art materials: (paint, glue, modeling clay, sponge painting, leaf rubbings, collages) is great for cognitive skills, discovery, fine motor skills, social skills, language/speech and sensory integration
- Parachute games: (you can use a sheet if you don't have a parachute) are great social skills builders
- Three to 4 piece puzzles: (with photo underneath) some children can put puzzles together with more pieces.
- Color matching games: Candy Land, colored bowls and colored items, etc.



Always remember to have fun!

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