

WHAT TOYS DO CHILDREN LIKE?

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A toy is:

“an object, often a small imitation of some familiar thing, for children and others to play with”.

All children are natural learners

What every child possesses is a natural
curiosity

The issue is NOT whether toys are good or bad but rather how can we best work with toys to ensure that children's development is fostered and that children are having good wholesome fun!!

The question of how do we choose an appropriate toy for a child his best understood in the context of the development of imagination.

One of the most essential activities throughout childhood is pretend play. It is central not only to the development of fundamental cognitive skills, but also to the development of basic social understanding.

Pretend, or make-believe, play is defined as a subcategory of play in which actions, persons, places and events are treated nonliterally.

From about 18 months to 2 years, children begin to create mental representations of reality; that is, they start to create mental or internal images of absent objects or past events

Around the age of 2 years, children begin to apply functions to objects that are separate to the objects' real-life functions. For instance, children may use a finger to demonstrate a toothbrush, or use a broom to symbolize a horse.

Whereas an 18-month-old can pretend to drink from a cup, a 24-month-old can enact the combination of pretending to pour *and* drink from a cup and then feed the doll she is playing with.

At around 30 months children begin to partake in sociodramatic play: play with others, either peers, siblings, or parents. Initially, children will merely assume identifiable social roles, such as “mummy and daddy” and “shopkeeper and customer”; later, children will label these roles and direct each other about the appropriate behavior that is required to fulfil that role adequately.

By 4–5 years, nearly all children engage in some form of play that allows them to pretend to be someone else and allows them to increase the sophistication of the roles and the story lines in their play. Elaborate fantasies that involve imaginary characters are common at this age. Children will assign roles to certain peers and manipulate certain props, giving orders like “I’ll act like I’m the astronaut” and “You pretend you’re flying”.

Pretend play promotes language development, the acquisition of motor skills (namely through rough-and-tumble play in later childhood), the practise of novel skills, the management of role distribution and leadership, the ability to plan space, time and ideas, the ability to regulate emotions (such as aggression), and the promotion of creation and story-telling.

Additionally, pretend play provides children with the opportunity to attain these benefits in a format that lacks any indication of failure. Children need not fear the consequences of pretend play because, after all, it is “just pretend”.