



TOYS FOR ALL REASONS

Play helps children to develop physically, mentally, and emotionally. Toys are the tools for play and are a great way to teach your child a variety of skills. Although many toys look exciting with the electronic gadgets, bells and whistles—don't forget all the fun you can have playing with your child with some very basic toys.

Board Games/Puzzles

Fine motor skills: Manipulating small pieces, cards and dice helps to strengthen muscles in the hands and fingers which support handwriting and cutting skills and develop coordination.

Language and social skills: Reinforcing turn-taking, colors, spatial and time concepts such as *first/last* and *ahead/behind*, *on top/under*, size concepts, joint attention and cooperation help develop language and social skills.

Pre-math skills: Activities that include counting, sequencing, and sorting provide experiences with number concepts and categories.

Thinking skills, visual motor skills and attention: Point out details on puzzle pieces and show how pieces go together to create a complete picture (i.e. part-whole relationship); problem-solving.

Examples: *Candyland, Hi Ho Cherry O, Uno, puzzles, Guess Who, Connect Four, Monopoly Jr., Sequence, Zingo, Jenga, Lite Brite, Operation, Science Kits.*

Construction Toys

Fine motor skills: Assembling/manipulating small pieces helps to strengthen muscles in the hands and fingers which support handwriting and cutting skills and develop coordination.

Spatial/pre-math skills: Learning how to stack blocks to complete complex Lego designs develops a child's understanding of spatial relationships and geometry.

Language and social skills: Encourage cooperation, turn-taking, sharing, concepts such as *fast/slow, up/down/under/over, big/small, ahead/behind*, action words such as *drive, move, crash, stop, stack, build.*

Problem solving/confidence/self-esteem: This may be accomplished as children create a plan and are successful in building and assembling pieces.

Examples: *Lego's, K'nex, tinkertoys, erector sets, and wooden train sets. Blocks can be built into towers, and walls, knocked down crashed into.*

Creative/Dramatic Play

Social/emotional skills: Toys that encourage dramatic play help children to learn social skills, and allow children to act out familiar roles. It also encourages cooperation, sharing and turn-taking.

Role playing: Through role playing, kids learn to communicate, get along with others and develop their imaginations.

Examples: *kitchen sets, dress up clothes, dolls, puppets, work bench and tools, action figures. A sand box welcomes a child to dig, dump, and pour.*

Large Motor/Outside Play

Strength/coordination/balance: Mastering the skill of riding a bicycle teaches children about balance, timing, sequencing, and where their own body is in relation to the rest of the world. They also learn to watch and avoid objects. These skills play a role in children's ability to line up in school, climb on larger playground sets, sit still during story time and understand the dangers associated with falling.

Language and social skills: You can use large motor play to foster development of turn-taking, cooperation, problem-solving, creativity, action words and concepts related to sequencing/time, size, location/spatial.

Examples: *Ride on toys, playground equipment, water toys, jump ropes, sports equipment, side walk chalk, balls, toss and catch sets.*

Watch your child explore a toy and leave the rules or directions open ended. They may teach you a great deal about how they want to use a toy. Remember to have fun with your child and enjoy your "play" time with him/her. Every experience is a learning experience regardless of its formula.

