



## **BUYING TOYS FOR CHRISTMAS**

### **Educational Toys & Learning through Play**

An educational toy is a toy that will help a child learn something worthwhile, something that will help them in the future. Play is the most important activity for any child, learning through play is a reality and is done every time a child plays. Toys are a vital part of playing and having a wide variety of educational toys can help your child develop their imagination and build their life skills.

The best educational toys are those that encourage the development of specific skills as opposed to toys that present facts and simply claim to improve learning. It is often thought that educational toys are those that are directly linked to schooling. However the educational value of toys is much more than just learning ABC's or how to count. The right kind of toys and playing allows children to develop their physical, social and creative and intellectual skills.

### **The Best Toys for Learning**

Nowadays there are so many toys available being labelled as 'educational toys' so it is difficult for a parent to know which ones will really help their child learn and be fun enough to hold their child's attention for longer than five minutes. Here is six categories of playthings that enhance learning and can be altered to suit your child as they grow up.

#### **1. Building Toys**

Toys such as Lego or Magnetix for older children or Mega Bloks or K'NEX for younger children are among the best playthings for developing a child's spatial awareness as well as their ability to persevere and stick at a task.

#### **2. Art Supplies**

Arts and crafts allow children to use their imagination as well as introducing them to early science. Use whatever you have around the house, cereal boxes, scrap paper and loo rolls all enable children to be creative and allow for non-verbal expression.

#### **3. Props for play acting**

Having a dressing-up box is great for children of all ages and helps to develop you child's imagination and language development. Engaging in role-play with your child can allow you to explain situations to child i.e. dressing up as a doctor before a visit to the hospital.

#### **4. Board Games**

Board games that involve matching, counting and turn-taking all help to teach your child these essential things. Games such as Snakes & Ladders for younger children and Monopoly for older children all involve social skills such as sharing, rules, taking turns and winning and losing.

#### 5. **Sports Equipment**

Playing sports is the perfect way to develop your child's co-ordination as well as keeping them healthy. You don't have to have any special equipment simply playing a game of football, rounders or even hide and seek all help your child to develop a sense of teamwork and fair play as well as counting to keep the score.

#### 6. **Puzzles**

Jigsaw puzzles are available for children of all ages and help children to develop patience to stay with a task that isn't completed instantly. Along with helping to develop logical thought and problem solving specific jigsaws can be chosen to go alongside what else your child is learning i.e. farm animals or the solar system.

### **TOP TIPS FOR BUYING TOYS FOR CHRISTMAS**

- Make sure you buy toys that will last your child all year long and will not only be used for a week or two
- Be sure to buy age appropriate toys, children can often get frustrated when they cannot master a toy
- If your child gets too many toys this Christmas why not put some away and give them to them during the year, that way they won't get bored!

### **TOP WEBSITES FOR BUYING TOYS THIS CHRISTMAS**

Early Learning Centre	<a href="http://www.elc.co.uk">www.elc.co.uk</a>
Toys 'R' Us	<a href="http://www.toysrus.co.uk">www.toysrus.co.uk</a>
Learning Space	<a href="http://www.learningspaceni.co.uk">www.learningspaceni.co.uk</a>
Amazon	<a href="http://www.amazon.co.uk">www.amazon.co.uk</a>

Not all toys need to be bought or have to be very expensive, you probably have some lying around the house. Children can have hours of fun playing music with the pots and pans in your kitchen or playing shop with food from your cupboard and quite often the toys that children enjoy most are the ones that you make together.

VISIT THESE WEBSITES FOR THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR CHILDREN

[www.dltk-kids.com](http://www.dltk-kids.com)  
[www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts)  
[www.creativekidsathome.com](http://www.creativekidsathome.com)

*If you would like help with any family issue, please ring Parents Advice Centre for guidance and support on freephone 0808 8010 722 or email [parents@pachelp.org](mailto:parents@pachelp.org)*

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