

Selecting Toys that support the Child's Development

Many of you are shopping for children this Christmas. It can be mind boggling what to purchase. There are all kinds of electronics, games and toys. But you may ask what toys provide for function and have helped children to grow and develop.

These tips come from Michigan State Extension. Toys fall into five basic areas. They include blocks and building toys; puzzles and problem-solving; pretend play items; things to create with and large motor play items.

Blocks and building toys stimulates brain development in all developmental areas. Children who play with blocks regularly when they are pre-school age will do better in math, especially algebra in middle school says from an article on block play from the Journal of Research and early child development.

There are all kinds of blocks and construction sets to consider. Adding cars, animals and small dolls can add to play.

Puzzles and problem solving toys teach problem solving skills. They also teach hand and eye coordination, fine motor skills, shape recognition, memory and awareness skills. Simple puzzles for younger children to more complex puzzles are good for older. Also toys such as latches, locks, buttons keys and counting toys are good examples of toys children would like.

Pretend play is a staple in early childhood. Children love to be police officers, construction workers or teachers. They also learn through dramatic play. This is where we learn that children explore their own likes and dislikes and interests. Toys such as child size furniture, dress-up clothes, dolls, cash registers, and transportation toys are good suggestions.

Things to create, we consider are. But it also is important in developing fine motor skills, cognitive development, math skills and language skills. Drawing tools, crayons, markers, paints, playdough, musical instruments are good suggestions for toys that support creating.

Large motor supports physical activity, but also supports a child's health and development and helps in preventing weight gain. Regular participation in large motor activities has also supported memory, increased academic performance and improve brain function. Balls, bicycles, climbers, toys to provide tunnels to climb through are good examples of toys.

When purchasing toys, be sure to think about the children's age and developmental ability. Make sure the toys are safe. Occasionally toys are recalled, you can sign up to receive recall alerts with Safe Kids USA.

Also consider that all children are different and they grow and mature at their own rate. Some children may be interested in specific toys for longer periods of time and become less interested in toys sooner. There are all sorts of resources on purchasing toys. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has several resources on good toy is a good resource.