

Healthy Environment: Safe & Age-Appropriate Toys

Written by Becca Stackhouse, FACS Extension Agent, Crisp County



Image source: Pixabay

Shopping at your favorite store or clicking a button online brings a certain responsibility when toy hunting for children. Holidays and birthdays are common times when children receive toys as gifts, and that can increase potential hazards for your child. Choose wisely to ensure that toys in your home are safe for children.

One of the most important steps is to choose toys appropriate for your child's age. This means choosing something that is complex enough to be interesting, but not so difficult that it's above your child's ability. It is also important to ensure that toys are used properly. When choosing the ideal toy for a child in your life, think about the child and the toy. Ask yourself about the child's interests, abilities and needs, likes and dislikes, and the type of play area available. Avoid toys that won't work in the space available. For example, remote-controlled cars usually do not work well on carpeted surfaces.

Here are some basic guidelines to choose safe toys for children:

1. Select high quality toys made of sturdy, durable materials. Avoid toys that are cheaply made, because they could break easily.
2. Avoid toys with sharp edges and/or sharp points. These could cause injury.
3. Avoid toys with small parts for children under age 3, or children who still put things in their mouths regularly. The small parts could be a choking hazard.
4. When buying battery-operated toys, make sure the parts are secure, the batteries cannot be removed easily, and the toy is sturdy enough to handle how your child plays.
5. Read package labels to make sure the toy was made using safe materials. Look for words like "non-toxic" on art materials, and "flame resistant" on fabric toys.
6. Check the suggested age range on the package. Be cautious about choosing toys that are for older children, because they may be unsafe for a younger child.
7. If a toy comes with instructions, be sure you read them and share any safety information with children. Teach children how to use toys safely, and always supervise children while playing.

Holidays and birthdays are also a great time to teach children to pick up their toys after playtime, and put them away on shelves or in a toy box. Having a designated place for specific toys will make clean-up easier, and keeping toys off the floor will reduce the risk of tripping. You should periodically check each toy to make sure all parts are still attached and nothing is broken or loose.

Play is the most important way children learn. By following these guidelines when choosing toys, you can help ensure that they are safe in their play.

For more information on selecting toys for children, visit the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) website (www.naeyc.org).

Things to Avoid

Sharp Edges
Small Parts
Loud Noises



Image source: Pixabay

