

Buying a Toy

As a parent, you may get excited about buying toys and activities for your child to engage in; however, it is just as important to learn how to analyze toys and activities before buying them. Here are some tips on how to select the ideal, fun, and educational toy for your child.

Step 1: Browse the Toy Aisle

Walk the toy aisle first to see what each area has to offer. Circle back to the toys/activities that caught your interest. Place them in your cart for step 2.

Step 2: Compare Toys

Once you have selected a few toys that caught your interest, begin to compare the toys. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Are they similar in what they have to offer? For example: Do they all teach the same concept (letters, nouns)?
2. What concept does it teach? Maybe the toy focuses more on the characters than an educational concept (e.g. sesame street characters vs common nouns on an ABC board).
3. How many concepts does each toy teach? Will you need multiple toys to teach various concepts or can you use one toy to teach variety (e.g. colors, numbers, common nouns, verbs, two-word phrases, imitation, etc.).
4. Does the toy speak for your child or does it give your child the opportunity to explore on his/her own?

Step 3: Selecting a Toy

Choose the toy that offers the most for its value. Remember that expensive toys do not equal greater quality. Select a toy that can be used with less or greater complexity, as you need it for your child. Right now, your child may need to learn nouns; however, later your child may need to learn how to use two-word phrases or verbs. Will the toy that you select allow you, as a parent, to make these adaptations for the child or will you need another toy at a later time?

Step 4: Creativity

Now you have selected a toy. The next question is: Can you make a similar toy/activity, at home or using a cheaper alternative idea from the dollar store? For example: create your own mystery box instead of buying one. How else can you use the toy? For example: puzzle pieces can be used in a mystery box, a scavenger hunt, or a peek a boo game, etc. It is your job, as a parent, to think outside of the box. Imagine that! Now it is your turn to become creative for your child. The more engaged that you are in choosing your child's learning activities, the more engaged you will be when you join their play.

My Example:



I walked down the aisle at Walmart and found an abundance of toys. Out of all the toys that I analyzed, I decided that Mr. Potato Head was a great choice for my "child." I choose this activity because it teaches:

1. Body Parts
2. Colors
3. Common Accessories (e.g. hat, glasses).
4. Can be modified in complexity: given choices, labeling nouns, two-word phrases (e.g. blue shoe, one hand, more please) or extended phrases.
5. Verbs: I can integrate verbs (e.g. kiss potato, sleep potato, hug potato, etc.)
6. Additional Opportunities: I can create additional learning opportunities by using play food and feeding potato head, I can create a sensory bin with the body parts, and a scavenger hunt can be created, etc.
7. Best of all... it was only \$6.98!

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