

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

'Tis the season for high-tech tots

CHILDREN



SANTA scored with this lad, who shows off his classic two-piece outfit with mock sport collar under crew-neck sweater. By Bull Frog Knits with elastic waist for toddlers; zipper slacks for bigger boys. About \$30.



TODDLER gets big-girl look with embroidered-top sweater with puffed sleeves and gathered shoulder. Pleated skirt picks up dominant color of embroidery, by Bull Frog Knits in Creslan for \$29 to \$38.



FASHION-SMART tot tries out his new set of tie-cord mittens and hat with earmuffs. Hat with animal pattern and earmuffs, by The Village Knitter, is about \$5.50; mittens, \$3.50.

Move over, plastic rattles. Here comes the high-tech baby! You'll find the tot of the '80s nestled among a vast assortment of sophisticated toys and state-of-the-art electronic safety products. Today's manufacturers offer a futuristic array of highly styled toys and technologically advanced gadgetry designed to keep youngsters safe.

"Our years of experience in this business have enabled us to create products that are a giant leap forward in terms of technology," says Norman Spiegel, president of Nasta Industries, a New York-based toy manufacturer specializing in electronics.

"Take the basic crib mobile, for example. For years you'd find this nursery staple attached to every baby's crib waiting to be wound up or turned on.

"Our 'My First Musical Mobile' has gone one step further," he continues. "This battery-operated mobile is voice-activated to play a soothing tune when baby starts to cry, then automatically turns itself off after one minute of play. Sometimes that's all it takes for a fussy baby to fall back to sleep."

Other toy manufacturers have also updated favorite toys of the past with state-of-the-art features. Interactive plush dolls that talk back to their owners (or even talk with each other) have begun to take the place of yesterday's popular stuffed animal. Teddy Ruxpin, the talking teddy bear from Worlds of Wonder, broke new ground two years ago and led the way for manufacturers such as Axlon and



SAFETY DEVICES are ideal gifts for parents with infants or small children. Hands Off Alarm is light-sensitive and sounds alarm when drawer or medicine cabinets are opened.

LJN Toys.

Lately, toy manufacturers have also begun to apply their high-tech know-how to child safety. These days, parents can choose from a wealth of sophisticated products that help them keep track of their children. Ideal's Electronic Child Monitoring Line, for example, enables parents to communicate with their children and monitor them both indoors and out.

Technological advances help protect children and give parents a break from constant watching. Portable intercom systems such as Nasta's Baby Minder let parents hear any sound coming from baby's room up to 300

feet away. Add to keep little ones away from potentially dangerous items that might be found in drawers of medicine cabinets, there's Nasta's Hands Off Alarm, which sounds a warning signal when a drawer or medicine cabinet is opened.

Other high-tech safety products from Nasta include the Safe-T-Guard Tub Alarm, which helps prevent bathtub overflows by sounding an alarm when bath water fills too high; and the Safety Mat, a colorful vinyl mat that sounds an alarm when stepped or crawled on, warning parents that their youngster is up and about.

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from

CONSUMER REPORTS

Kids pick their favorite toys

By the Editors of Consumer Reports

If you want to find out what kids like best, just leave the youngsters with a pile of toys. You'll soon learn which ones are played with most.

That's what the editors of Penny Power, a consumer magazine for 8- to 14-year-olds, have been doing with panels of youngsters.

To help you with your holiday shopping, the editors have listed some of the toys, games and books that proved to be popular with many of the young panelists.

Fifteen battery-powered trucks got a good going-over by one sixth-grade class. The Stomper Bully from Schaper (\$23) earned high marks because it was super-fast and a good climber. The Monster Machine from Tomy (\$25) moved slowly but steadily, and climbed just about anything. The Flex from Galoob (\$27) had tires that could expand and move it quickly and smoothly over bumps.

(Prices indicated for the trucks and other items are approximate retail before discounts.)

In another toy test, two dozen youngsters judged the Casio PT 87 electronic keyboard (\$70) to be their favorite. An adult must explain the complicated instructions. But after that, the kids can make up their own tunes or play those on a cassette. The Casio lets you choose from eight tones, such as piano or flute — and a dozen rhythms, including rock.

Two other highly rated toys were the Sonic Rangers from Fisher Price (\$50) and Nerf Table Hockey from Parker Brothers (\$20).

The Sonic Rangers is a pair of headset walkie-talkies. Only one ear is covered, so youngsters wearing the units can still be aware of outside sounds. Each headset takes a 9-volt battery.

Nerf Table Hockey is a fast-action game that can be played on most tables.

Ten new board games were rated by another panel of young testers. They looked for games that were easy to set up and easy to play once the rules were understood. The panelists wanted games that two or more could play and that required both luck and

skill. They also looked for games that were challenging for young people age 10 and older.

The clear choice among the panelists was WHODUNIT from Selchow and Righter (\$14). While some were confused by the rules at first, all ultimately enjoyed the game. It takes an hour or longer to play.

Three other board games that got good marks were Advance to Boardwalk (\$12), a shorter version of Monopoly from Parker Brothers; Spy versus Spy from Milton Bradley (\$12), a game based on the zany Mad Magazine cartoon; and the Walt Disney Family Version of Trivial Pursuit from Selchow and Righter (\$22).

TV often monopolizes a kid's attention these days. But many young people are still turned on by books, such as the one who asked a Penny Power editor, "Did you ever get so caught up in a book that you snuck it into the shower to read?"

Among the 50 books reviewed by a panel of young readers, those most enjoyed included: "The Secret Garden" by Frances Hodgson Burnett, "Sounder" by William Armstrong, "Bride to Terabithia" by Katherine Peterson, "Harriet the Spy" by Louise Fitzhugh, "Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird" by Jean Little and "Sarah, Plain and Tall" by Patricia MacLachlan. Paperbacks for young readers run from \$2.50 to \$5.

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Buy great toys for less than \$10 each

If the only holiday jingle you've heard lately is the sound of the cash register ringing up high prices, take heart! Here are 10 terrific toys for Santa's sleigh that should fit an elf's budget:

WIN BY A NOSE GAME (Pressman Toy Corp., \$9.99). Mr. Nose is a new dice randomizer that gives kids (and adults) a fun new way to "pop" the dice. Players pull on Mr. Nose and move their nose-shaped playing pieces around the three-dimensional board in a fast-paced race to complete the face and win!

SPORTBREAKS (HG Toys Corp., \$2.49 and \$8). These colorful, collectible vinyl characters are perfect for the sports aficionados on your list. Stick Horse, one tough hockey hombre; Stills, a long-legged basketball bully; Rob N. Steal, a fast-footed baseball player; and Hold M. Tight from the gridiron are among the collection's 2½- and 7-inch zany figures.

WEIRD WATCHIES (Nasta Industries, \$7.99). They're the weirdest watches to ever tell time! Bite Fright,

Retread Fred and Blob Slob watches have three-dimensional rotating heads that can be twisted in any direction and opened to reveal an LED readout of the time and date.

THE BUGABOO (Dowtime, \$4.95). Made of genuine defective computer parts, the tiny Bugaboo "guarantees" to keep away all other bugs and glitches from your computer! Housed in their own plastic cubes, no two "Bugs" are alike. Perfect for anyone whose life has ever been bugged by computers!

YOMEGA (Caffrey, Inc., \$9.95). The yo-yo is back. But this time it's better. The Yomega features a patented clutch that makes it spin longer than regular yo-yos and returns it to the hand automatically. Tough tricks like "walk the dog" and "rock the baby" are now easily mastered by even the most inexperienced yo-yoer.

GRANDMA'S TRUNK (Hoyle Products, \$4.99). This fun memory game comes with its own sturdy plastic red trunk and 40 playing cards —

each with a different colorful illustration. The object: To discard and then remember the correct order of all the cards found in Grandma's Trunk.

SKITTLE BOWLING (Pressman Toy Corp., \$9.99). Skittles returns this year with Skittle Bowling. Players try to knock down pins with a ball that's attached to the Skittle pole. Go for a strike! Go for a spare!

MR. & MRS. POTATO HEAD (Hasbro, \$4 each). The comical duo are back, now with bendable arms and poseable bodies!

LEGO BASIC BUILDING SET (Lego, \$9.99). Get kids started with this classic building toy in a basic set of 99 colorful, interlocking pieces.

NEWBORN POUND PUPPIES (Tucka, \$6.99). Those cute 'n' cuddly adoptable plush pups are even more adorable in their new "newborn" size.

Put them all together and you have 10 great gifts for a total of less than \$75 — guaranteed to brighten your holiday season without breaking the bank.

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BOOKS

Give The Gift of Knowledge.

A.....Astronomy; Anne — the Working Princess (Paul James); Atlas of the Bible

B.....Bloom County; Bonny's Big Day (James Herriot); Babies; Bruce Trail Guide; Pierre Berton (Stirling Out, 1920-1947)

C.....Caesar of the Wilderness (Peter Newman); CanLit Foodbook (Margaret Atwood); Company's Coming; Calendars & Christmas Cards; Classics; Canadian Living Cookbook

D.....Doonsbury; Dictionaries; Difficulty of Living on Other Planets (Benji Lee); Dungeons & Dragons; Discovery of the Titanic; Dinosaurs — and more dinosaurs!

E.....Exploring the Night Sky (Astronomy); Eagles of North America

F.....Farmer's Almanac; Free to be... a Family (Mario Thomas); Fairy Tales; Friendship Book; Fighting Fantasy

G.....Greenspan: Case for the Defence; Peter Gzowski (The New Morningstar Papers); Gordon Sinclair: A Life (Scott Young)

H.....Rick Hansen: Man in Motion; Humour; Historical Atlas of Canada; Hockey

I.....Illustrated Anne of Green Gables

J.....Jacob Two-Two and the Dinosaurs (Mordecai Richler)

K.....Stephen King; Knitting

L.....Lanny (Lanny McDonald); Letts Diaries; Learn a Language; Denis Lee

M.....Metamorphosis: Stages in a Life (David Suzuki); Mother Goose; Robert Munsch; Microwave; Shirley MacLaine (It's all in the Playing)

N.....Knowlton Nash (Prime Time at Ten); Nature Guides; Nursery Tales

O.....Out-of-print books

P.....Paddle to the Amazon (Don Stockell); Photography

Q.....Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (Trevor HaR)

R.....Random House Dictionary of the English Language (unabridged); Ritter in Residence (Edna Miller); Rupert Bear

S.....Schmecks Appeal (Edna Staebler); Stationery; Danielle Steel; Spycatcher (Peter Wright)

T.....Talking Books; This Won't Hurt a Bit (Vicky Gabeau); Thrillers

U.....The Ulysses Voyage (Tim Severin)

V.....Virunga: The Passion of Dian Fossey (Farley Mowat)

W.....White Pass: Gateway to the Yukon (Roy Minter); The Wall (Vietnam Veterans Memorial)

X.....Our annual "Spot Prize". \$30 of free books for the first correct answer. Which of Shakespeare's plays was the model for the hit comedy "Boys from Syracuse?"

Y.....Yachting and The Sea

Z.....Zoo's Who Jigsaw Puzzles

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