



the HERALD'S  
*Christmas Gift Guide*



## A game-buying checklist for parents

Your child has been subjected to thousands of television commercials, each vying for a share of your wallet this holiday season. How can you as a parent be sure that the game you purchase is a good value — in more than financial terms? What points should you consider as you roam the aisles of your local toy store? And most important of all, will your child have fun playing the game?

Game playing brings children, family and friends together for loads of conversation, laughter and good fun — that's why board games figure high on kids' wish lists for birthdays, holidays and other special occasions.

"Mommy! Daddy! Want to play a game?" Playing board games with children provides excellent opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's development. Says Dr. Brian Sutton-Smith of the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, "Parents who participate in their children's play are better equipped to select and match toys to each child's interests and abilities."

Besides being fun, games are also an entertaining way to teach children new skills, such as color recognition, matching objects, or following rules. Scott Marley, contributing editor of *Games* magazine explains, "All good games are educational, often in ways that are overlooked. Preschoolers learn to concentrate and to follow instructions from simple games. Older children increase their coordination from physical games, and practice memory, logical reasoning, and planning ahead from games of strategy."

Ruth B. Roufberg, toy consultant and researcher on play related learning, asks three questions of every game she reviews:

1. Does the game match the child's interests and abilities?

Three-year-olds are just learning the basics of game play. For instance, *Snail's Pace Race* teaches children how to roll a die and take turns — and every player is declared a winner.

At ages five and six, many children are ready for competitive play. Games such as *Race to the Roof* from Ravensburger introduce the element of surprise: Will I lose a turn? Will I get sent back to the start?

Children ages eight to ten are interested in playing games on an equal

level with mom and dad. A challenging family game such as *AMAZEing Labyrinth* evens out the playing field for all ages with an enjoyable exchange of laughter.

2. Is the game fun to play again and again?

The easiest way to determine if children would enjoy a game is to ask! Trust their experiences in playing with their friends.

The best games are the ones with repeat play value. Each round of play should be fresh and interesting. For instance, Ravensburger's *What's My Name* has a two-sided playing board, "secret" dice, and requires the individual players to think up clues, making each game a new experience.

3. Are the game board and playing pieces durable enough to survive long-term play?

Parents need to consider the quality of a product when selecting a game.

The box should be sturdy enough to be used as storage for the game pieces in between play time. A high-quality product should have both wooden playing pieces and a wipeable board surface for sticky fingerprints. In addition, the game manufacturer should offer free replacement of missing game pieces.

By considering these three questions when deciding which board game to buy, whatever the occasion, a parent or relative will be sure to choose one that is both age- and skill-appropriate. If you remember that learning can be entertaining, your children will get the most important benefit from playing quality board games — fun that builds skills.

For more information on the games mentioned in this article, visit your local specialty toy retailer or call Ravensburger toll-free at (800) 631-1272.



GAMES ARE YEAR 'ROUND FUN FOR ALL AGES! Mark and Cyndee move brightly-colored wooden snail game pieces down the garden path of *Snail's Pace Race* from Ravensburger.



## Go together: Trains and Christmas

Toy trains are almost as much a part of Christmas as are sleighbells and lights. Artist Charles Wysocki, who cherishes tradition above all else, has created *Whistle Stop Christmas* as his interpretation of this beloved symbol of the holidays.

*Whistle Stop Christmas* is the 1991 Greenwich Workshop Christmas print — the tenth renewal of a unique program of publishing signed and numbered limited edition prints to com-

memorate the holiday season. The print, which measures 21 inches wide by 18 inches high, is available through Authorized Greenwich Workshop Dealers in all 50 states and Canada.

For Americana artist Wysocki, *Whistle Stop Christmas* isn't about toy trains as much as it is about real-life trains. "When I was eight years old, my parents took me for my first train ride — from Detroit to a small town in Pennsylvania, where we spent

Christmas with relatives," he recalls. "The view out the window was a wonderment. The countryside was covered with snow, farmhouses were ablaze with light, there were horses and sleighs. It still gives my heart a warm squeeze to think about it."

In *Whistle Stop Christmas*, the era of steam engines and country railroad stations comes to life. For artist Charles Wysocki, those days never really ended.



## New outdoor bulbs save energy — here's how!

Older sets of outdoor holiday lights use five- or seven-watt bulbs. While that doesn't sound like much, these less energy-efficient sets can have a real impact on your energy bill.

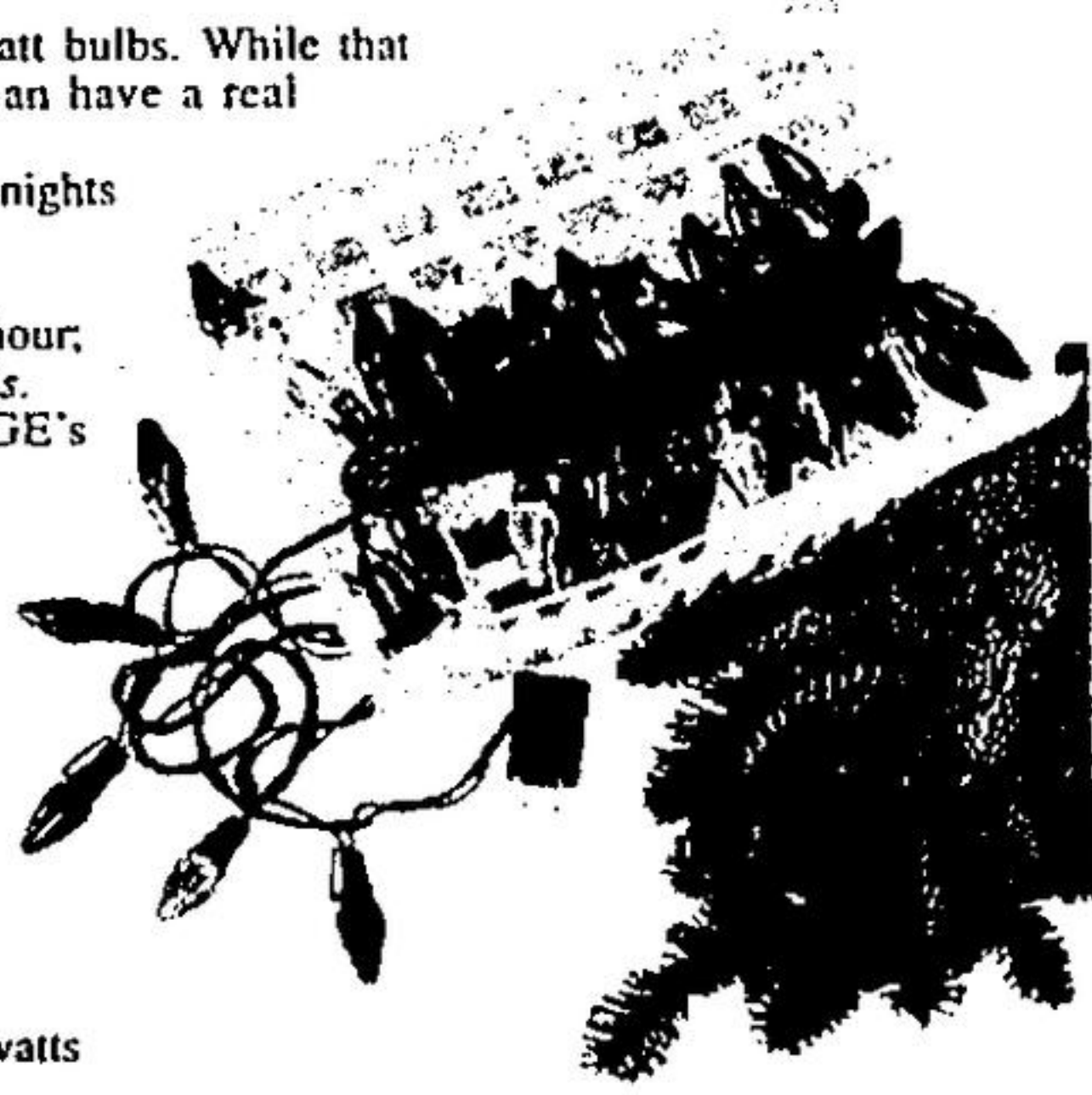
If a household were to burn "1,000 points of light" for 30 nights for six hours a night, here's how older bulbs perform:

- 1,000 points of light x seven watts a bulb = 7,000 watts;
- 7,000 watts x eight cents per kilowatt hour\* = 56 cents an hour;
- 56 cents an hour x 180 total hours = \$100.80 in energy costs.

But today's more efficient string-a-long sets, such as GE's Classic Lights™ sets with one-watt bulbs, really shine:

- 1,000 points of light x one watt a bulb = 1,000 watts;
- 1,000 watts x eight cents per kilowatt hour = eight cents an hour;
- eight cents an hour x 180 total hours = \$14.40 in energy costs.

Classic Lights sets are available in solid and assorted colors as well as white, feature branch clips for easier decorating and have a special "locking cap" that helps prevent bulbs from shaking loose.



\*National average kilowatt hour rate — one kilowatt = 1,000 watts

## Express the warmth of the holidays



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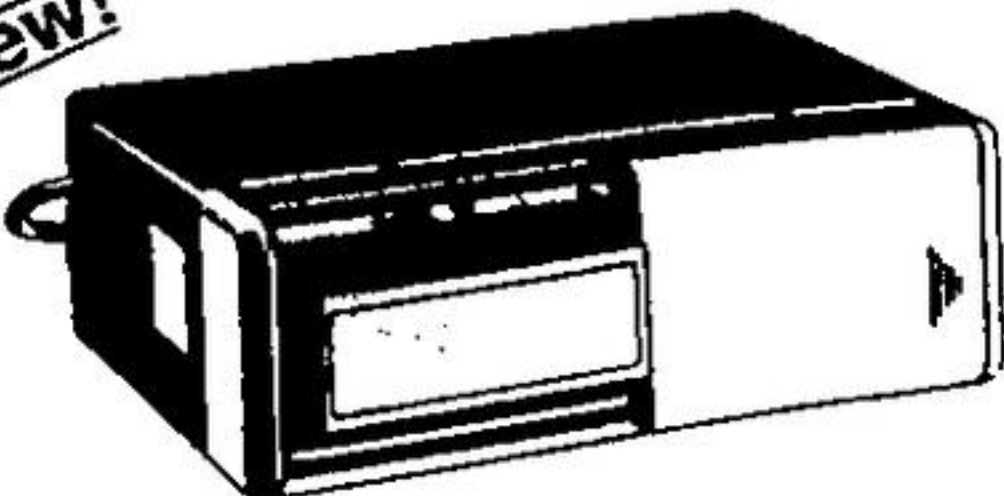
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### CDC M4

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