

Buying toys for 'differently abled' kids

Our basement is a wonderland of toys. My wife is bringing in children for her new home daycare centre. Over the past few months, she has been collecting toys and they now reside in our basement and backyard.

She mentioned that she found a toy house that has a couple of occupants that have wheelchairs. We spoke about the need for toys to represent the population, including people with disabilities and just how few there really are. Barbie had a friend named Becky who used a wheelchair but could not access Barbie's Playhouse.

Sounds familiar? This line of toy was discontinued shortly after being introduced.

What about the toys themselves? Are there any commercial toys that can be used by children who are physically or developmentally disabled? There are many websites that deal with toys for "Special Needs" children but most are expensive and are generally used in a formal educational setting.

Toys R Us has a guide for buying toys for "Differently Abled Kids" and the issues that should be considered when purchasing them.

- Do they have multi-sensory appeal?
- Will it fit in the play area?

Andrew Tutty



• Is it adjustable for height, sound volume or level of difficulty?

• How safe is it and is it durable?

The complimentary Toys R Us buying guide web page <http://www.toysrus.com/shop/index.jsp?categoryId=3261680> addresses these concerns and highlights safety tips for safe play.

Our children are unique individuals so the toys are not classified by disability. Rather they use symbols to classify them as to how well they develop various skills such as Language, Social, Auditory, Creative, and Tactile domains. Toys R Us works closely with the National Lekotek Centre to evaluate all the toys for suitability. These toys ensure all kids are active participants in playtime, fortifying their senses, skill development and self esteem.

Andrew Tutty is a member of Halton Hills Accessibility Advisory Committee (HHAAC).

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