

Give your child balanced toybox

With the toy-buying season once more upon us, it's helpful to have some practical advice on toy selection which, all too often, becomes a haphazard exercise in compromise, substitution and guess work.

An excellent idea that a leading toy manufacturer dispenses to consumers writing in for advice on choosing toys, is that of the "balanced" toybox.

Four types

The concept is based on the four basic kinds of play defined by psychologists: active physical, manipulative or constructive, imaginative, and social. A balanced toybox would thus contain toys that involve children in each of these kinds of play.

Apart from the obvious attraction of being able to plan your toy-shopping list and budget around categories of playthings, there are several other advantages.

For one, balanced play activities help develop a well-rounded child. For another, a variety of carefully selected toys is likely to sustain a child's interest for longer than toys that are basically similar.

Best value

Some toys lend themselves to several kinds of play. These not only expand children's play experiences but also help develop their mental and physical capabilities. Toys of this type are, of course, the best value for your toy-buying dollars.

If you buy a toybox, incidentally, be sure the lid is counter-balanced and does not have a lock or catch.

A balanced toybox should include:

A ball: for toddlers, a rubber ball suitable for indoor use; for older children, a baseball and bat, a tetherball with standard.

A bath toy: for babies, a floating duck; for older children, a diving whale, floating soapdish or scrub mitt.

Books: for toddlers, books with large type and simple colorful illustrations.

A musical toy: for toddlers and pre-schoolers, a jack-in-the-box or toy guitar; for older children xylophones, marimbas or bongos.

A cuddly companion: for toddlers and pre-schoolers.

A life-like doll: for pre-schoolers and older children male and female multiple-activity dolls.

A building toy: for pre-schoolers, take apart trucks or animals, for older children wooden logs or sophisticated building sets.

Puzzles: for pre-schoolers, simple wooden ones with four to 10 pieces; for older

children, progressively difficult designs.

A wheeled toy: for pre-schoolers, push-around cars and trucks, for older children, racing sets or electric trains.

A wheeled ride-on toy: for toddlers (space and safety permitting), a tricycle, for older children, a bicycle.

Games: for younger children, easy to play, quick-winner games, after age eight, competitive word or strategy games.

Art supplies: for smaller children, crayons, finger paints, colored paper; for older ones, sculpting clay, watercolors, embroidery and stitchery.

Mary Wiseman, co-ordinator of a developmental learning program at the children's mental health unit, North York General Hospital, has conducted extensive research into play assessment and the relationships between various kinds of toys and activities.

She points out that before adding toys to a playbox, parents should take into account the child's present level of competence and the toys it already has.

"It's important for children to have some toys they've already mastered and can feel happy with when they're tired," says Mrs. Wiseman. "They also need toys that challenge their current capabilities as well as some that are a little advanced."

Tackles them

"The need to experiment with more complex toys can emerge without the mother being aware of it. If these toys are in the playbox, the child simply picks them up and tackles them."

Children sometimes become frustrated with new toys simply because they don't know what to do with them. It's a good idea for parents to demonstrate what can be done with a toy by actually playing with it and involving the child in the activity.

Some manufacturers do, incidentally, guarantee their toys against breakage. Mattel Canada, for one, guarantees its products for three months from the time the child actually receives the toy. Toys broken within this period will be repaired by the company for the cost of labor only.

**CLEAR STAR
THEN BE YOU GLAD,
GOOD PEOPLE,
AT THIS TIME OF THE
YEAR;
AND LIGHT UP YOUR
CANDLES,
FOR HIS STAR IS
SHINETH CLEAR.**
(French Carol)



A WARM GREETING was extended to Santa Claus when he dropped in at the St. Paul's United Church Sunday School Christmas concert on Sunday following the service. Youngsters

eagerly greeted his Ho Ho and sleigh bells after a brief program that featured songs, pantomime and plays. Santa chatted with each youngster as his helpers handed out the treats.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

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bright with happiness and joy.

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