

Children's Services

Toy Safety

Toys provide children with many benefits – they can be educational, fun, or they can give security/comfort (sometimes all three). Toys can be commercial or home-made, expensive or cost next to nothing, or be cleverly improvised from simple household items such as boxes and wooden spoons.

Unfortunately toys are sometimes the cause of injury to children. This can be because they are:

- badly made – often imported from overseas countries where standards might not be in place
- not suitable for the age of the child using them – eg have small parts that can be a choking hazard to babies and toddlers
- being used incorrectly
- designed to be dangerous – eg toys that fire off projectiles or use explosives
- not used with the correct safety equipment – eg helmets, wrist/elbow/knee guards
- shoddily repaired or parts have been substituted with unsuitable replacements
- being used without supervision, or under the supervision of older children who might not be mature enough to realise potential danger – eg bikes on roads, balloons that can burst and leave small pieces that can be swallowed or inhaled.



What can I do to prevent injuries from toys?

When choosing toys or when offered hand-me-downs, it's important that you check them for:

- sharp edges or points that can spike or cut
- excessive noise that can damage hearing
- weak construction – loose pieces such as buttons and eyes, open stitching on soft toys, wobbly wheels etc
- moving parts that might pinch or trap little fingers
- small parts that can be swallowed or inhaled
- long strings or ribbons – more than 30cm – that could lead to strangulation
- broken parts, splinters and uneven surfaces on wooden toys
- unstable ride-on toys or those that are too advanced for your child's age and abilities – eg bikes with brakes the child can't operate effectively (take note of instructions or labels that advise the suitable age range or advise of potential hazards)
- small, easily removed batteries – if swallowed, these can poison children possible toxic substances – check labelling eg on crayons, textas, paints and anything liquid.

What toys are generally suitable for each age group?

The following is a guide to some suitable toys for the different age ranges.

Babies 0 – 1 year

As babies like to place things in their mouths – basically they see everything as food – their toys need to be well made and non-toxic. Anything that can fit into a film canister is too small for babies. Suitable toys include:

- rattles and toys that make a noise when pushed or pulled
- large soft balls
- bath toys
- large stacking or nesting boxes
- books especially designed for babies – made from cloth, plastic or cardboard pages (but check that the binding is secure).

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Brought to you by YWCA NSW supporting people at critical times. Authored by Liz Connors, Early Childhood Specialist, YWCA NSW

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Children's Services

Toy Safety continued

12 – 24 Months

As children in this range are more mobile than babies – most are walking by this age – they are inquisitive and curious and like to 'get into' everything. Suitable toys include:

- simple puzzles
- balls
- water and sand toys – buckets, spades, sieves, pots and pans, funnels, plastic jugs etc
- push/pull-along toys
- small wading pools (supervise carefully)
- posting boxes and nesting toys, large blocks
- simple musical instruments – drums, shakers etc
- ride-on toys
- teddy bears, soft toys and dolls
- toy cars and trucks
- picture books.

2 Years

2 year olds are also inquisitive and active, but have more control and coordination over their bodies. Suitable toys include:

- finger/hand puppets
- kitchen sets
- dress-up clothes and accessories
- trikes
- large crayons and pencils, paints with large brushes
- medium and large blocks, 4 – 6 piece puzzles
- books with simple stories and pictures
- dolls and teddy bears/soft toys
- musical instruments.

3 Years

3 year olds are more into imaginative play – eg fantasies and superheroes. Suitable toys include:

- play dough and modelling clay
- paints, large crayons and pencils
- dress ups and accessories
- puppets, dolls, doll houses and furniture
- toy animals – plastic farm animals, dinosaurs etc
- 10 – 12 piece puzzles
- building sets – eg Mobilo®, Constructo-Straws®.

4 – 5 Years

4 and 5 year olds have a much longer attention span and are able to use problem solving skills. Suitable toys include:

- picture story books
- puppets, dolls
- 15+ piece puzzles, matching games (eg Picture Lotto®) and memory games
- simple computer games
- building sets, woodwork implements (small hammers, nails, wood off-cuts)
- cars, trucks, aeroplanes
- trikes and scooters
- musical instruments
- tents and cubby houses.

6 – 8 Years

Suitable toys include:

- board games – eg Junior Monopoly® – card games, jigsaw puzzles, Jenga®
- bats and ball, soccer ball, basket ball
- building sets – eg Lego®
- computer games
- rollerblades, skateboards (with protective equipment)
- swimming pool toys
- magic kits
- origami kits.

While you can buy the toys listed, consider joining a Toy Library to have access to a range of good-quality educational toys. For things that aren't reusable (eg paint, paint brushes and paper) check out bargain shops or make or recycle your own. Toys don't have to be expensive – as long as they inspire creativity and aren't potentially dangerous, children will enjoy using and learning from them.

To learn more about safe and suitable toys, see:
www.greenweb.com.au/kidsafe/html/toy_safety.html
– 'Toy Safety' fact sheet.

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