



*Teachers for  
Resisting  
Unhealthy  
Children's  
Entertainment*

# Toys for Healthy & Creative Play - 1997

*All toys listed are appropriate for girls and boys.*

- **Toobers and Zots - Glow Masks and Wands (Hands-on)**

Approximate Cost: \$10 - \$25 (depends on size of set)      Ages: 3 and up

**Description of the toy:** Glow-in-the-dark foam pieces that connect together to make interesting creations.

**Why we chose it:** Children can use them in a wide range of ways, including making props for dramatic play.

- **Building Brix (EZDO for kids)**

Approximate Cost: \$22      Ages: 2 to 10

**Description of the toy:** A building toy that contains 16 big cardboard blocks.

**Why we chose it:** This construction toy can be used in endless ways. Good for home use.

- **Japanese Set Master Building Blocks (TC Timber)**

Approximate Cost: \$39      Ages: 3 and up

**Description of the toy:** Building blocks including multi-tiered roofs and ornate pagodas. Builders can create temples, palaces or calming formal gardens. 63 pieces, 22 shapes.

**Why we chose it:** An interesting variation on blocks that expands children's experience with different housing structures to include a global perspective.

- **Picnic Basket / Picnic Case / Lunch Time Playset / Cook & Dine (Battat)**

Approximate Cost: \$11 - \$23      Ages: 3 and up

**Description of the toy:** Each set has self-contained cases with sturdy plates, utensils, etc.

**Why we chose it:** Can be used for imaginative play for many years. Dramatic play is important for young children's development. Representing daily home activities helps them make sense of their world.

- **My Tool Belt (Battat)**

Approximate Cost: \$18      Ages: 3 to 6

**Description of the toy:** Tool Belt stores the 18 colorful & sturdy plastic pieces.

- **Tool Set (Learning Resources)**

Approximate Cost: \$19      Ages: 3 to 6

**Description of the toy:** Tool Set has 13 plastic pieces including drill, saw, tape measure in sturdy case.

**Why we chose them:** Both sets can be used for imaginative, dramatic play.

- **Puppy Veteranarian Kit (Battat)**

Approximate Cost: \$30      Ages: 3 and up

**Description of the toy:** Stuffed puppy and pet carrier included with medical equipment.

**Why we chose it:** Children enjoy caring for animals and including medical scenarios in their dramatic play.

- **Rescue Vehicle Play Set (Learning Resources)**

Approximate Cost: \$16      Ages: 3 and up

**Description of the toy:** Includes fire engine, ambulance, fire hydrant and four play people.

**Why we chose it:** Sturdy plastic toys; people come in variety of skin colors.

- **Guess How Much I Love You Game (Briar Patch)**

Approximate Cost: \$20

Ages: 3 to 6

**Description of the toy:** A non-competitive board game using matching and pantomime for 1 to 4 players.

**Why we chose it:** Helps players develop thinking( strategy, memory, etc.), visual, language and social skills (taking turns, following directions, sharing and respecting others.

- **I Spy Memory Game (Briar Patch)**

Approximate Cost: \$20

Ages: 4 to adult

**Description of the toy:** 60-card memory game; 50 riddle cards for advanced players; word games included.

**Why we chose it:** There are many ways to play this non-competitive game at all levels. Develops same skills as above.

- **Harvest Time Game (Family Pastimes)**

Approximate Cost: \$14

Ages: 3 to 7

**Description of the toy:** Cooperative game where players try to plant and harvest before winter.

**Why we chose it:** Can be used for many years or in a family with several ages of children as there is a more challenging version for older (up to 7 year old) children.

- **Paint Center (Koosh Creative)**

Approximate Cost: \$17.95

Ages: 4 to 137

**Description of the toy:** Paint set with koosh brush, roller, stamper, stencils and tray.

**Why we chose it:** Innovative art material with many possibilities for creative artwork.

- **Multicolor Art Case (Battat)**

Approximate Cost: Sketch & Color (35 pieces) \$7.50; Deluxe (80 pieces) \$20

Ages: 3 and up

**Description of the toy:** Case with pastels, markers, colored pencils. Deluxe set has scissors, ruler, sharpener, glue.

**Why we chose it:** Completely open-ended, basic art materials in convenient case.

- **Gertie Ball (Small World Toys)**

Approximate Cost: \$3.75 - \$10

Ages: 3 and up

**Description of the toy:** Variety of balls, “nubbie,” “super,” “mondo” made from soft, flexible, rubbery material.

**Why we chose it:** Balls are easy to grip; can be bounced, kicked or thrown.

- **Pitch ‘N Catch (Packerland Toys & Sports)**

Approximate Cost: \$5

Ages: 3 and up

**Description of the toy:** Velcro covered paddles and ball.

**Why we chose it:** Easy for children to have success; ball sticks to velcro surface of paddle.

- **Wooden Puzzles (Lights, Camera, Interaction)**

Approximate Cost: \$10 - \$13

Ages: 1 to 5

**Description of the toy:** Wooden peg puzzles for different ages and abilities. There are pictures under the pieces; puzzles are of fruit, transportation, farm animals.

**Why we chose it:** Beautiful puzzles, durable and inviting. Many have “jumbo pegs” for easy grip for small hands.

- **Parquetry Blocks & Pattern Cards (Learning Resources)**

Approximate Cost: \$27

Ages: 3 and up

**Description of the toy:** 32 wooden geometric shapes, 6 colors with 24 full color pattern cards.

**Why we chose it:** A creative activity that builds math and thinking skills. Can be used through many ages and stages of development.



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## Toys to Avoid - 1997

- **Star Castle Series: Cosmetic Castle** (Trendmasters, Inc.)

Approximate Cost: 2 sizes \$10 & \$16

Ages: 4 & up

**Description:** Castle-shaped plastic case with items for miniature and real life make-up play. One of a series of castles which all focus on "appearance" play.

**Why we chose it:** Limits girls play to nothing more than making themselves look pretty.

- **Talking Tina: Classroom Set** (Toy Max, Inc.)

Approximate Cost: \$13

Ages: 4 and up

**Description:** Barbie-type teacher doll & a few miniature school items. Press her stomach & she says, "Good work, you're smart, time for lunch, you're late, time for recess."

**Why we chose it:** Dolls & other toys that talk & say inept things foster unhealthy views of girls & women's roles. Tina trivializes teachers' roles in the learning process.

- **Barbie: One Special Night** (Mattel)

Approximate Cost: \$9.50

Ages: 4 and up

**Description:** Board book that shows how Barbie gets dressed for a special night out. Comes with jewelry & make-up props so girls can imitate Barbie.

**Why we chose it:** No more than an instruction book on how to dress & look sexually seductive. As a board book it has no literary merit & will attract children who are too young.

- **Barbie Super Talking Pager - "Hear lots of messages in the voice of Barbie doll."** (Mattel)

Approximate Cost: \$10

Ages: 3 and up

**Description:** Pink pager with "real pager messages, sounds & lights."

**Why we chose it:** Limits play by channeling girls into imitating Barbie & superficial aspects of being a teenager — like getting preprogrammed messages: about shopping trips.

- **KFC Play Food Meal** (Gordy Toy)

Approximate Cost: \$3

Ages: 3 and up

**Description:** Unattractive plastic food that's supposed to be Kentucky Fried Chicken fast food.

**Why we chose it:** Products with logos of individual companies (like KFC) are nothing more than an ad for their product. Replica toys of fast food products can promote poor nutrition.

- **Lost World Jurassic Park: Dino Koosh** (OddzOn Products)

Approximate Cost: \$7

Ages: 3 to 137

**Description:** A Koosh ball complete with hard plastic head & feet of Lost World dinosaurs.

**Why we chose it:** By linking the fighting dinosaurs of the movie with creative ball play, the popular view of Koosh balls as a safe, creative toys takes a nose dive and when children throw it someone could get hurt.

- **Spiderman Venom Action Figures: Bride Of Venom** (Toy Biz)

Approximate Cost: \$10

Ages: 5 & up

**Description:** Highly grotesque & sexualized female figure based on the comic & TV show. Comes with a "Vile the Spider with Snap Attack Legs."

**Why we chose it:** Links many issues, such as divorce, being a bride, sex, violence, & death, in inappropriate ways. No connection to issues children normally would use in their play.

- **Spawn Ultra Action Figure including Clutch** (McFarlane Toys)

Approximate Cost: \$10

Ages: 5 & up

**Description:** Based on Spawn, the extremely violent movie, TV show & popular comic book, Clutch looks grotesque, has tattoos, & robotic limbs including a firing peg leg machete.

**Why we chose it:** The entire line of Spawn toys hooks children into the highly inappropriate Spawn world with an unhealthy linking of sex and violence they cannot understand. Crutch portrays physical handicaps in a negative & scary way.

- **Hercules Feel The Pain, Pat The Panic - “A Fun To Touch Book”** (Watermark/Disney)

Approximate Cost: \$7

No age recommendation.

**Description:** Board book with scary story about Disney movie characters, “Pain” & “Panic, who try to feed Baby Hercules a bottle with poison; something to touch on each page.

**Why we chose it:** A media-linked & scary variation of the classic “Pat the Bunny” book. Title characters’ names exploit human feelings & confuse children. Language like “poison,” “kidnap” & “brat” provide inappropriate content for a board book.

- **Goosebumps Microverse - “A night of terror tower micro play set”** (Kenner- Hasbro)

Approximate Cost: \$10

Ages: 5 & up

**Description:** Miniature castle with trapdoor, dungeon & “spring-up attacking executioner.” An ad for Goosebumps TV show is on the box.

**Why we chose it:** By focusing play on torture & scary themes, this toy perverts a primary purpose of toys — to help children master their fears. Interests kids in the scary TV show.

- **World Wrestling Federation (WWF) Bad Boys Action Figures: Vader** (Jakks Pacific)

Approximate Cost: \$5

Ages: 4 & up

**Description:** Action figure with “Bone crunching action. Bad has never been so good.” Each figure is based on a real wrestler who is pictured on the box. Box says to watch Vader on TV.

**Why we chose it:** Focuses play on strength & using bodies as weapons. Linking figures with photos of real wrestlers who can be seen on TV, confuses children about fantasy & reality.

- **Space Shooter Target Game: Jurassic Park - the Lost World** (Milton-Bradley)

Approximate Cost: \$20

Ages: 5 & up

**Description:** One of several games of the same name based on violent movies. Children play by shooting foam disks. Package promotes joining the Jurassic Park Club for \$19.99.

**Why we chose it:** Turns playing games into fighting & shooting. Entices children to spend a lot of money to join on a club which is virtually an ad for more Jurassic Park products.

- **Nerf Chainblazer Blaster** (Kenner - Hasbro)

Approximate Cost: \$15

Ages: 6 & up

**Description:** An “automatic” projectile gun; rapidly shoots 8 darts (foam with suction cups). “Prepare yourself for the ultimate transformation with pieces that clip onto your body.”

**Why we chose it:** This toy takes action figure play one step further by encouraging boys to strap the weapon to their bodies & become the fighting figures themselves. As with most projectile toys, including the entire Nerf weapon toy line, projectile toys can be dangerous.

*A Letter About Fighting Toys: for Children & Adults to Talk About Together*

*Some kids really love toy guns and toys with weapons on them. They have fun pretending to fight with them. A lot of teachers worry about weapon toys. They think that if kids play with these toys and pretend to fight and kill, it will teach kids that it's okay to hurt people and that fighting and hurting is fun. Kids often say, "We're only pretending. We're just 'playing'."*

*Some teachers say kids in their classes pretend to be characters on TV. Kids act out kicking and fighting. Then kids often really do hurt each other. It gets scary. It isn't pretend, teachers say.*

*Many teachers are worried. They are angry that TV shows and ads make violent toys look cool so kids want to buy them. They say companies shouldn't be allowed to sell violent toys to kids on TV.*

*Teachers hope this letter will help families talk together about the toys they buy and make thoughtful choices.*

- *What do you think about what the teachers say?*

- *What do you think teachers, parents and children should do about fighting toys?*

- *What can grown-ups do to help children be safe and learn not to fight?*

- *What ideas do you have about how children can play without fighting toys?*

*Thanks, From Many Teachers All Over the Country*