

Pediatricians Offer 3 Simple Guidelines for Toy-Buying Parents

We've all seen it happen. Pick out the toy you only dreamed about as a child, wrap it up, watch a little tot open it, and... see him start playing with the box. It's an old cliché that's so true it's laughable.

So how can we avoid such a scenario and ensure that the children in our lives receive toys they actually use, enjoy, and are beneficial for them as well?

According to the [Los Angeles Times](#), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has several suggestions for adults facing this problem. Their overarching recommendation is to avoid flashy electronic toys that promise educational value but may only hinder social development.

Instead, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends toys which fulfill one of the following three categories:

1. Imaginative – Toys should “stretch horizons,” pediatricians explain. Toys which make the child get involved and do something other than simply being entertained fit the bill.

C.S. Lewis experienced this type of play when his brother built a miniature garden. In his autobiography, [Surprised By Joy](#), Lewis writes,

“Once in those very early days my brother brought into the nursery the lid of a biscuit tin which he had covered with moss and garnished with twigs and flowers so as to make it a toy garden or a toy forest. That was the first beauty I ever knew. What the real garden had failed to do, the toy garden did. It made me aware of nature—not, indeed, as a storehouse

of forms and colours but as something cool, dewy, fresh, exuberant."

It's not hard to recognize that any encouragement of imagination can lead to greater thinking and future ingenuity as a child grows.

2. Inexpensive – Parents, the AAP explains, easily fall into the trap of thinking that an expensive, state-of-the-art toy is more educational or developmentally-friendly for their children than one whose price tag is more reasonable.

Apparently this line of thinking is as old as the hills, for philosopher John Locke [noted](#) its presence in his day. He soundly squelched this idea, charging that expensive presents "taught pride, vanity, and covetousness" rather than contentment.

Instead, Locke suggests parents let children make toys themselves. This, he notes, teaches "moderation in their desires, application, industry, thought, contrivance, and good husbandry; **qualities that will be useful to them when they are men....**"

3. Interactive – Finally, pediatricians from the AAP say that quality time is the best present any parent can give their child. That's a recommendation we all know intuitively, but are quick to protest that we are far too busy to fulfill it.

For those who offer such an excuse, a look at Teddy Roosevelt's parenting might be in order. As first the Vice President and then the President of the United States, Roosevelt was undoubtedly a busy man. But as his personal letters explain, Roosevelt refused to let that busyness get in the way of time with his children, [playing](#) "hide-and-go-seek in the White House" or having a rousing game of "[bear](#)":

"Recently I have gone in to play with Archie and Quentin

after they have gone to bed, and they have grown to expect me, jumping up, very soft and warm in their tommies, expecting me to roll them over on the bed and tickle and 'grabble' in them. However, it has proved rather too exciting, and an edict has gone forth that hereafter I must play bear with them before supper, and give up the play when they have gone to bed."

When it comes to toys and playthings, there's hardly a parent that doesn't want to give his or her child the best. But is it time we realized that often "the best" looks a lot different than the latest, greatest, and most expensive toy that money can buy?

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[Image Credit: U.S. Air Force Photo/ Staff Sgt. Joshua Garcia]