

Pointers For Parents

Finding Toys that Last For More than a Season

(NAPSA)—Children seem to outgrow toys as quickly as they do their new clothes. However, there are toys available that stand the test of time. To find toys that will last for more than a season, heed this advice from the experts:

- Follow the “rule of engagement.” Children have short attention spans—according to some studies, it is not until age 6 or 7 that children begin focusing on an activity for one to two hours. Parents should look for toys that are engaging and involve children in challenging activities and inspire them to use their imaginations. Flashing lights, happy characters, fun rhymes, and interactive buttons capture younger children’s fancy while older children gravitate toward toys with a musical beat, fast-action tactile experiences, and “beat-the-clock” competitions.

- Look for toys that train the brain versus drain the brain. With children as curious as they are, parents can enhance their inquisitive nature by selecting toys that inspire learning and discovery. Literacy is surprisingly low among today’s youth—according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 40% of third graders read below “grade level.” However, parents can help their children get ahead with toys that inspire a love of learning through fun activities and games. For instance, toys that incorporate encouraging play and reward for participation rather than scold for a wrong answer motivate children to play more. Slightly older children learn well through helpful hints, repetitive questions in an area of difficulty and content personalized to their individual



Savvy parents look for toys that educate as well as entertain.

learning level.

- Toys that grow with a child, stay with a child. Studies show that children develop rapidly, especially during their formative years. Within six months, they can advance from looking at simple picture books to recognizing detail and names, turning pages and saying words. A 3-year-old is ready to match shapes and colors and cut with scissors. By 5, that same child may be counting, drawing, riding a bike, and putting together complicated jigsaw puzzles. Toys that last are toys that can continue to challenge children as they develop.

- Find toys that help ease your children into technology. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Internet connectivity is increasing quickly in schools. By the fall of 2000, almost all (98 percent) public schools in the United States had access to the

Internet, whereas only 35 percent of schools were connected in 1994. Toys that encourage children to learn to use technology and the Internet in a fun, educational manner will only help further their comfort level as they head off to school.

- Where can you find toys that meet these criteria? “Parents look for toys that their children will play with over a period of time. Companies such as

LeapFrog are producing quality products with exceptional play value that are not only fun and educational but evolve with children’s learning abilities as they grow older,” said Jim Silver, co-publisher of *Toy Wishes* magazine and the Toy Report. Popular toys include the LeapPad Learning System, which helps children learn to read through interactive audio, characters and music; the Imagination Desk, which teaches core preschool skills through coloring; and the Turbo Twist line, which incorporates fast-paced, interactive games that adjust to a player’s learning level. These toys connect to the Internet with the Mind Station so that parents and children can extend the life of the products with fresh content for never-ending learning and entertainment.

For more information on these toys and others, parents can log on to www.leapfrog.com.