

## Holiday Toy Shopping Tips

(NAPSA)—Getting that perfect holiday toy can be easier said than done. By dedicating some time in advance, you can buy toys that are meaningful but also provide added play experiences for months to come. To make holiday toy shopping easier, it is important to determine the play value that toys will provide (from techy to nurturing), define your budget before you hit the mall or Internet, and start early, as many must-have items are sure to be hard to find as the holidays get closer.

Jim Silver, toy expert and editor in chief of TimetoPlayMag.com, says that having a well-chosen variety of toys helps children use different play skills and styles. “It is important to understand what your kids want and how they play in order to create a balanced play experience as they grow.”

To make your holiday toy shopping easier, here are a few tips to consider:

**1. Think long term:** Some toys are all about the “wow and now” and are likely to be tossed aside once the novelty wears off. To extend the play span of toys, look for items that have play extensions beyond the box. This can include accessories that add on to the main toy, online content that adds to the storytelling, or multipurpose toys that add value. For example, Barbie Photo Fashion Doll is not only a doll but also a digital camera. This integration



**A toy that combines tech and creative play can be fun for a good long time.**

of toy with technology serves as a smart investment, providing the child with a toy that has multiple uses.

**2. Set your budget:** Decide whether you want to buy one big, impressive gift and a few stocking stuffers or several moderately priced gifts. If you have children of similar ages, consider if a single, costly gift can be shared. Shared playtime makes for great childhood memories while encouraging cooperation. With millions of households owning iPads, toys that are integrated with iPad apps can be an affordable way to encourage family play and leverage the household's existing tablet. Using apps for iPad, new Hot Wheels Apptivity Cars turn 1:64 scale Hot Wheels cars into tiny game controllers, blending physical and digital play into one. The app is free to download, and in addition to the Hot Wheels

Apptivity apps, there are offerings for boys and girls of all ages, including Fisher-Price, Monster High and popular leading apps and entertainment properties such as Cut The Rope, Fruit Ninja, WWE and Batman.

**3. Balance is key:** It's important when selecting a toy to take into consideration the age of the child for whom you are purchasing it. Add variety by giving some high-tech toys complemented by basic toys, such as dolls and cars. The ability for kids to role-play and create their own stories with toys and play sets should not be underestimated. Toys like the new Monster High High School allow kids to use Monster High content as a starting point to build and create their very own stories with the dolls and accessories. Allowing kids to generate their own stories helps foster creativity and imagination.

**4. Start early:** If you can make your shopping list early and buy a few key gifts ahead of the rush, you'll give yourself more time to enjoy the season, focus on selecting just the right items and not miss some of the popular toys sure to fly off shelves. To understand more about a toy's function and appropriateness, visit its manufacturer's website for product descriptions and demonstrations.

With a little research and planning, the presents opened will not only bring smiles during the holidays, but fun and enduring playtime for months to come.