

### Put a damper on noisy toys

Toys are an exciting part of a child's life and can support many developmental skills, but did you know that some toys can cause hearing loss in as little as 15 minutes?

As the holidays approach and many children are thinking about presents, the following guidelines can help you buy fun, safe toys that support early learning.

**What is a noisy toy?** Noisy toys expose your child to loud sounds that can damage his hearing and cause him to get used to hearing loud sounds. Any toy with sounds over 85 dB has potential to cause hearing loss over time.

The National Sight & Hearing Association ([www.sightandhearing.org](http://www.sightandhearing.org)) publishes a list on their website of the year's noisiest toys. Several free decibel meter apps are available, which allow you to measure sounds coming from toys. One of the most accurate apps is the Armstrong Ceiling Solutions Sound Level Meter.

You can also check toys by pushing buttons and holding the toy near your ears, the way your child might play with it. If it feels uncomfortable to hold near your ear, the toy is likely too loud.

**What should I do with noisy toys?** When possible, say no to noisy toys and opt for quieter toys that allow your child to do the talking. If your child gets a noisy toy as a gift, placing duct tape over the speaker to muffle the sound, taking out the batteries, setting the toy to the lowest volume, and limiting the time your child plays with the toy can help create safer play.

**Which toys are best?** Age guidelines on packaging can give a general idea about the age range that the toys are appropriate for, but always keep your child's unique skills and interests in mind.



Look for toys that:

1. Are "open ended" and can be played with in more than one way. These include blocks, vehicles, and interlocking toys, which allow your child to use her imagination. These types of toys also encourage problem-solving skills and support motor development.
2. Can be used in new ways as your child grows to avoid spending money on toys that will be used for a few days then quickly forgotten. For example, small plastic animals are fun for a young toddler to make sounds and pretend to feed, while an older toddler or preschooler can use them to act out a story he makes up. Other examples include action figures, play sets, trains, dump trucks, stuffed animals, and dolls.
3. Look like "real world" objects. Your toddler is exploring the world and is interested in doing the same things she see you do. These can be items that you no longer need or pretend versions of the real objects, including keys, phone, dress-up clothes, musical instruments, broom and dustpan, and plastic dishes/food.

As you are searching for toys this year, remember to check for noisy toys and be on the lookout for toys that will support your child's development! Good luck!