

The Case for Toys That Do Nothing!

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Toy-buying season has arrived! As providers of early intervention services, we at Easterseals-Goodwill are often asked what toys best support a child's overall development. There are many options out there. Hopefully, the following guidelines can help you find fun, appropriate, and interactive toys for your child.

What toys are best?

Typically, high tech, battery-operated, button-pushing toys are not the best toys on the market. The best toys are those that do nothing! These toys allow children to provide all the power, imagination, and sound effects. The more a toy does, the less a child can do. Battery-operated toys can limit creativity, imagination, and the development of functional language and motor skills.

Toys that do nothing often share these characteristics:

- They are open-ended, allowing more than one way to play with the toy. These types of toys will spark creativity and encourage problem solving.
- They promote interaction by encouraging collaboration and conversation between a child and their peers or parents.
- They can be used for simple or elaborate pretend play. These types of toys stimulate imagination and can be used for many years.

Some examples:

Toy Food and Dishes. Children interact with food all the time! Often their first pretending involves food, such as

feeding a stuffed animal or giving parents an empty cup. There are lots of pretend opportunities with food, like shopping, making dinner, hosting a birthday party, etc.

Blocks and Legos. Children can build towers, make a garage for their favorite car, or create a whole town. Younger toddlers often enjoy putting these in and out of containers, or building then crashing down!

Vehicles. Kids might start by pushing a car to drive, but there are endless options for their imagination! They could pretend to be a mechanic, take a car through a car wash, or take dolls to the playground.



Playdough. You don't necessarily need any accessories to allow your child to create with playdough. This is a great sensory option as well.

Stuffed Animals, Dolls, and Puppets. Children might start by taking care of these toys (like feeding or putting them to sleep) and grow into pretend play (like taking them to the doctor).

Costumes and Props. You could collect items from around your house to dress up in, such as purses, ties, hats, aprons, jewelry, etc. Old cell phones and containers can also be exciting for kids.

Books are toys too! Choose books with repetitive text, rhymes, or fun sounds and words. Look for interactive books with touch and feel pages or flaps to open and close.

These toy suggestions are just that--suggestions. Your best guide is your child and their interests! Follow what they are fascinated by.