



## Selecting Toys for Children

Dana H. Davidson  
Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

**W**hen selecting toys for children, consider the following guidelines.

### **Playability**

How many different ways can this toy be used? For active play, small muscle play, imaginative play, play with others, language development?

### **Safety**

No pieces smaller than an inch and a half for children under three years old; no pieces that may pinch fingers or break off; no sharp edges; no projectiles; select fire-proof items; no toxic ingredients; shatterproof; non-electric.

### **Durability**

Will this item break the first day or the first week? Can this toy be used at different stages of childhood? Dolls, blocks, sand and water play, collections, and books are all toys that appeal to many ages of children and can be brought out again and again. Good toys work properly!

### **Attraction**

Try to match the toy with the child. Good play materials usually look nice and feel good to touch and hold. Many toys are very high interest and may be called "status

toys" one year but be out of fashion the next. It is wise to carefully select toys that are "tried and true," including a toy or two you enjoyed as a child. The simplest, most true, and least expensive toys are those found in nature, such as sand, water, bubbles, and mud.

### **Cost**

Toys are expensive and become more so all the time. We need not spend a fortune on toys, because some of the best play materials cost the least. A large carton; a box of dress-up play materials; a basket of crayons, paints, clay, and paper; a box of seeds and rich soil; a book of fairy tales... these are all full of play and learning opportunity and cost less than many high-pressure sales items.

### **Adult involvement**

Children need and love to play with their grown-ups. Studies have shown that we actually teach children to play (and it is good for the grown-ups, too!) Take time each day—more than once—to play with your children. Enjoy!