



Choosing Safe Toys for Toddlers and Preschoolers

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/safetoy-young.html>

Toys are an important and fun part of every child's development. But they can come with risks too. [Choking](#) is a hazard for kids ages 3 or younger, because they tend to put objects in their mouths. So, it's important for parents to check out their children's toys and supervise when kids play. Here are some general guidelines to keep in mind when shopping for toys:

- Toys made of fabric should be labeled as flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Stuffed toys should be washable.
- Paint on any toys should be lead-free.
- Art materials should say nontoxic spirit.
- Crayons and paints should say ASTM D-4236 on the package, which means that they've been evaluated by the American Society for Testing and Materials.

Steer clear of older toys, even hand-me-downs from friends and family. Those toys might have sentimental value and are certainly less expensive, but they may not meet current safety standards and may be so worn from play that they can break and become hazardous.

And make sure a toy isn't too loud for your child. The noise of some rattles, squeak toys, and musical or electronic toys can be as loud as a car horn — even louder if a child holds it directly to the ears — and can lead to hearing loss.

Safe Toys for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

Always read labels to make sure a toy is appropriate for a child's age. Guidelines published by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and other groups can help you make those buying decisions.

And consider your child's temperament, habits, and behavior whenever you buy a new toy. Even a child who seems advanced compared with other kids the same age shouldn't use toys meant for older kids. The [age levels for toys](#) are determined by safety factors, not intelligence or maturity.

Keep these age-specific guidelines in mind:

- Toys should be large enough — at least 1¼ inches (3 centimeters) in diameter and 2¼ inches (6 centimeters) in length — so that they can't be swallowed or lodged in the windpipe. A small-parts tester, or choke tube, can determine if a toy is too small. These tubes are designed to be about the same diameter as a child's windpipe. If an object fits inside the tube, then it's too small for a young child. If you can't find a choke tube, ask a salesperson for help or use a toilet paper roll tube.
- Avoid marbles, coins, balls, and games with balls that are 1.75 inches (4.4 centimeters) in diameter or less because they can get stuck in the throat above the windpipe and make breathing difficult.
- Battery-operated toys should have battery cases that secure with screws so that kids cannot pry them open. Batteries and battery fluid pose serious risks, including choking, internal bleeding, and chemical burns.
- When checking a toy for a baby or toddler, make sure it's unbreakable and strong enough to withstand chewing. Also, make sure it doesn't have:
 - Sharp ends or small parts like eyes, wheels, or buttons that can be pulled loose
 - Small ends that can reach the back of the mouth
 - Strings longer than 7 inches (18 centimeters)