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CHILDREN NEED

TOYS...

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CHILDREN NEED TOYS

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Children need toys. They need them for fun. They need them to satisfy the ever-present urge to be active, to be up and doing. They need them for all of the investigating, exploring, experimenting, discovering, manipulating, creating, that is so much a part of growing.

Suggestions are given here about the types of toys that fit different stages of growing from infancy to the teens. These suggestions are offered only as a general guide since each child's toys should be the ones that fit him. The only way to be sure that they do fit him is to notice what he can do and likes to do, and then to choose the toys accordingly.

When the baby is feeling and handling things, noticing different sounds, sitting up, creeping, beginning to walk, babbling, cooing, gurgling, laughing, saying words, learning cute tricks, investigating everything within reach.

UNDER 18 MONTHS

When the baby first begins to grasp and reach out for things offered him and to notice sounds, it is time for rattles of different sizes, shapes, and tones, and for squeaky rubber animals and dolls. Soft woolly animals and dolls will satisfy the urge to feel and squeeze and later to hug and cuddle. Toys that fasten to the side of the crib afford fun for exploring eyes and hands. So do the exercise toys that stretch across the crib. The baby will reach for the rings and bars on these and very soon will pull vigorously on them. Floating toys add fun to bath time and it is interesting to watch the growing skill with which eyes and hands work together as the baby pursues them. Strings of big wooden beads are fun to wear and to shake and bang.

Very soon the baby will be sitting up and holding things with a sure, firm grasp, turning the objects this way and that, and passing them from one hand to the other. It is time then for small rubber, plastic, or wooden blocks. It is a good idea to get ones of different colors and with pictures on them because before long looking at the pictures or sorting the blocks by color will be part of the fun. The transparent blocks with objects inside are fun to shake and rattle. If a small basket is at hand the youngster will drop the blocks one by one into it, tip them out, put them in again, and repeat the performance over and over. If nested boxes, beakers, or cups are provided the baby will take them apart and play with them sep-

arately at first. Then someday they will be set one atop the other and there will be hit and miss efforts to get one inside the other. Before long they will be fitted together in their proper order.

The baby's growing interest in sounds suggests providing books of Mother Goose rhymes and jingles to read to him, as well as the picture books of familiar animals and objects that children so much enjoy looking at. It is a good idea for first books to be those that will not tear since the youngster will be wanting to turn the pages himself ere long.

When creeping and walking days come it will be time for push-pull toys, animals on wheels, roller toys, a little light doll carriage, a small light wagon. The musical, chiming, push-pulls are always good fun. Simple take-apart and put-together toys satisfy the urge that the youngster has about this time to handle, investigate, manipulate. Some children will be ready for the flat wooden link trains without wheels that fit together easily and can be pushed along as the child creeps from here to there. Peg cars with big, loosely fitted pegs are fun. So are the many different toys where blocks of different sizes and shapes can be slipped through the spaces provided for them, picked up, slipped through again, and the whole thing done over and over.

As a child plays with toys such as these that have been suggested, he is taking his first steps in getting acquainted with the world of things around him. He gets the feeling of hard and soft though he does not know the words that describe the feeling. He gets the feeling of different shapes. He catches the tones of different sounds. He feels the lightness or heaviness of the things he picks up. He catches the idea of fitting things together even though he cannot always do it. Most of all he is busy and interested and having fun.

When the child is walking more and more steadily, then running with ease and climbing, exploring and discovering more and more things, imitating, talking fluently, finding life very interesting and exciting.

18 MONTHS TO 3 YEARS

At this stage of growing a child needs things with which to be very active -- a low tricycle; a sturdy little wagon; a doll carriage still light but heavier than before; animals on wheels; a sturdy truck to straddle and ride; all sorts of things to push and pull; something to climb, usually a few low steps or a sawhorse with slats at first, then a small, low gym and slide. Balls, big, little, and middle-sized always have their place for active play. So do balloons. A plastic wading pool is fun, with big inflatable figures to knock around, and beach rings, balls, and animals. A sand box big enough to get into provides for a little quieter type of enjoyment. It is a good idea to have plenty of pails, cups, shovels, scoops, spoons, and sieves, for digging, pouring, sifting.

The imitative play that characterizes this stage of development suggests a play corner, maybe a play house, a play table and chairs, tea-party dishes, pans and pots and kettles, dolls and doll furniture, a telephone, and simple dress-up clothes. Little children love these things with which they can carry on the activities they see going on around them. They like furniture and utensils for the dolls but they like things that fit their own size, too, a stove they can stand at to cook, an ironing board that fits their height, a bed they can curl up in, a dressing table they can sit down at, cups that they can drink from. Stuffed animals as well as dolls always have a place in a child's imitative play and for companionship as well. It is interesting to see how, as youngsters play, they gather up and sort out their ideas; how they become more and more proficient in carrying out the details of their undertakings; then how their understanding broadens to include more details.

Manipulative interest still calls for all sorts of things to take apart and fit together, easy things at first, then harder ones -- color cones and pyramids; nested blocks; form boards with two or three pieces, easy puzzles. Clay or plasticine is wonderful for rolling, patting, poking, and later for making whatever comes to the youngster's mind. Finger paints and easel paints offer opportunity for another sort of manipulation and experimenting and then for the portrayal of ideas, feelings, impressions. Paints and crayons and chalk are one of the means for giving full rein to explorations with color. Children love to try out one combination after another. Color names are picked up incidentally and discrimination among colors becomes a matter of gradual accomplishment. Sounds continue to be of great interest to most children and this suggests truly toned musical instruments in considerable variety, chime toys, a tom-tom, marimba, tambourine, triangle, xylophone, swiss bells, and record player with well chosen records.

If there is plenty at hand to satisfy a child's urge to feel, handle, poke, fit together, and if there is freedom to experiment with materials, one will see an emerging interest in constructing and creating. It is a good idea to add more and different blocks to those of baby days because the blocks lend themselves to such a variety of uses. It is none too soon to provide a set of the type that are cut from inch lumber on unit size, three inches wide and three, six, and twelve inches in length. Children make good use, too, of the eighteen and twenty-four inch lengths. At first blocks will be set on edge or laid flat to make fences and sidewalks and piled up into crude unplanned structures. Gradually the structures will take on more and more well-balanced and symmetrical form and the first thing one knows the youngster will announce what he intends to make and do it. Big hollow blocks serve a useful purpose at this age. They are especially good for piling, for climbing, for outlining play areas, for setting up quickly the impromptu playhouses little children so much enjoy.

Many of the toys that have been mentioned as especially fitting the interests of children around eighteen months to three are the same type with which

the youngster will have had fun before and they will continue to provide enjoyment in the years that follow three. They will be used in different ways, though, and some will be left behind with the baby days.

When a child is nimble on his feet, able to use his hands with assurance, becoming able to speak distinctly and to talk volubly, still experimenting, dramatizing, creating, and becoming more and more interested in companionship with other children.

3 YEARS TO 6 YEARS

About this time a child knows how to do so many things, has ideas on so many subjects, expresses himself so clearly, that one is often amazed. With this development there is pretty sure to be also a reaching out for new experiences, an eagerness for new learnings, a great enjoyment of growing independence. It is vitally important that there be plenty at hand with which a child can try out his rapidly developing abilities, with which he can experiment and create, with which he can express his feelings and impressions and ideas.

Imitative play takes on a more dramatic form during this stage of development. A fireman's or postman's hat, an Indian or cowboy outfit, a doctor or nurse's kit, is likely to set off play that will bring in other children if there are any around and that will weave together all sorts of realistic details showing how observant the child has been of things going on around him. Hand puppets that are easily managed are almost sure to bring forth conversation made up on the spur of the moment. Both dolls and stuffed animals usually get drawn into the play and are a very essential part of it.

It is time now to add cooking sets, laundry and cleaning sets, perhaps a carpet sweeper and vacuum cleaner, to the housekeeping accessories of earlier years. Each addition will give fresh impetus to the play. Dolls in increasing variety are needed for housekeeping play. They will be bathed, fed, dressed and undressed, put to bed; indeed taken through the whole range of the child's own experience. Clothes for the dolls and all sorts of accessories increase in importance as the child becomes more and more concerned with realistic detail. Interest in store play is likely to parallel housekeeping play with need for scales, play money, containers for the shelves, and of course a cash register.

Interest in words and figures will be developing about this time and a child will find good use for a blackboard and chalk, or whiteboard and crayons. Counting frames will be fun, too. Paints and clay are as important as ever, if not more so, offering as they do the opportunity for experimenting with color, form, design, and for the sheer enjoyment that such experimenting brings.

One can now add different shapes of blocks to the original unit-size set, such as cylinders, triangles, and arches. These provide for the more elaborate building which the child will want to do as his ability to make sturdy well-balanced structures increases. One is likely to notice an interest in setting up a street scene, in laying out a village, in making a farm similar to one the youngster may have seen. It is a good idea to be sure that accessories for such layouts are available -- doll families, small trains, boats, autos, trees, and the like. As a matter of fact the addition of these often serves to suggest things that it is fun to build but that the child might not have thought about otherwise.

Easy construction sets are another means for satisfying the urge to make and manipulate, opening up as they do wide new fields for experimentation. Puzzles with more pieces and more shapes are suitable now. Some children will be ready to handle scissors easily enough to enjoy cutting though one need not expect the cutting to be either straight or accurate.

Lengthening of arms and legs and growing skill in the use of the little tricycle will point to the readiness for a bigger vehicle. Some children will want a two-wheeler, perhaps one with the auxiliary wheels that can be removed when the youngster feels sure how to manage it. Big sturdy trucks give opportunity for vigorous active play and stimulate all kinds of dramatic imaginative play as well. A ditch digger, milk truck, dump truck, road grader, fire truck, and the like, each suggests a different sort of play.

Addition of a variety of molds to the earlier sand toys will give new impetus to that play. So will small autos, planes, trucks, and animals. A wading pool, water toys, inflatable figures, balls, gardening sets, and other equipment for vigorous play such as swings, teeters, and slides, give constructive outlets for the energy that keeps the youngster on the move so much of the time.

Sometimes the toys that one can provide will satisfy an urge that the child already has. Sometimes they will serve to stimulate an activity for which he is fully ready but which might not be thought of without the suggestion offered by the toy. The thing to be sure of is that whatever is provided fits what the child is ready and able to do with enjoyment.

When a child is showing marked interest in being one of the group, when he is expanding his horizons rapidly, gaining new skills and finding satisfaction in them, organizing ideas on many subjects, becoming proficient in the school subjects.

6 YEARS TO 9 YEARS

Many of the old toys will retain their appeal during these years though many will now be left behind

and new and different ones will be needed to satisfy developing skills and widening interests. This is the time to supplement the earlier housekeeping equipment with things that "really do", -- a mixer that really mixes, a sweeper that really sweeps, an iron that really heats. Doll clothes will now have to be as nearly as possible true to the model. There is likely to be interest in sewing for the dolls and if patterns for the clothes are provided and a small sewing machine is available skills of lasting usefulness can be learned.

This is the time when interest in paper dolls flourishes with girls and there is likely to be cutting out, coloring, and decorating of a great variety of costumes. A doll house, miniature dolls, and furniture to fit them will result in endless arranging and rearranging of the rooms with minute attention to detail and probably the making of wallpaper, rugs, and accessories.

Store play is likely to become more organized with setting of prices, making of change, and making of signs as important details. A toy typewriter and a printing outfit give opportunities for plenty of practice in school-learned skills. These same skills make word and number games of great interest with anagrams, dominoes, and lotto usually in the lead. A blackboard will have more use than ever and will often serve as a stimulus for playing school.

The gaining of skills becomes very important to a child during these years. Girls become adept at jumping rope, playing jack stones, bouncing balls and the like. Boys go in heavily for baseball, football, marbles, and perhaps target shooting. Both girls and boys are likely to enjoy parallel bars, ladders and other gym apparatus, skates, scooters, skis, and stilts.

A sturdy wagon and a bicycle are practically indispensable. This is the time for an electric train, perhaps beginning with a basic outfit to be added to year by year. Puzzles can be harder now with the jig-saw type offering real challenge. Metal construction sets offer challenge to a youngster's ingenuity and help satisfy the urge to make things. One does well to furnish toys that afford plenty of opportunity to satisfy the love of creating, not only giving the child things with which to create, but allowing him plenty of freedom to experiment. This suggests paints as before, clay, a sturdy work bench with good tools and wood that is easily handled, easy craft materials, and musical instruments, perhaps adding a harmonica and accordion to the ones earlier provided.

When the child is growing fast, perfecting skills, collecting avidly, beginning to select hobbies, becoming very independent and sure of himself, looking ahead to a career.

9 YEARS TO 12 YEARS

Many a life-long hobby has had its beginnings in these years and many a career has followed the lines of playtime experiences.

Children in this stage of development love to explore the possibilities offered by handicraft outfits -- bead work, shells, jewelry, metal work, leather, weaving, knitting, block printing, wood burning, work with plastic. Model kits of boats, airplanes, autos, open up new ideas for many children. Hobby sets for the study of soils and rocks, chemical sets, atomic energy outfits, magnets, and the like, suggest ideas that many children otherwise would never come upon. Telegraph sets, sound effect outfits, and makeup kits are the needed impetus to take others into new fields of enjoyment.

With the great urge for perfecting skills and the growing interest in competition there is a challenge for many in archery, target shooting, dart games, table tennis, and handball. Board games that call for skills of varied sorts interest many children. Card games based on knowledge of history, geography, science, or art, interest others. Anagrams, dominoes, lotto, usually continue to hold interest with some children taking up checkers, chess, and cribbage. Harder construction sets have a place now. Addition of more detail for the electric train outfit is appropriate and provides for hours of enjoyment and useful experimenting.

The play with small dolls and miniature furniture will continue to be of interest for some girls and may lead into amateur house furnishing and interior decorating. The work bench with good sturdy tools and plenty of different kinds of wood will be more useful than ever now. One is likely to be frequently amazed at the wide range of interests of both boys and girls. There is no occasion for concern if attention turns from one interest to another. This is another form of the experimenting, exploring, investigating, of the earlier years. It remains important now, as then, to have plenty at hand with which the urge to explore and discover can be satisfied.

Children need toys throughout the whole span of childhood and on into the teens. From infancy on toys, wisely chosen, perform the dual function of providing fun and enjoyment and of contributing to the development of the child for whom they are provided.

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