



Giftng Guide

Giving and receiving gifts is part of every culture. It is often part of celebrations and holidays and while usually exciting and joyous for the receiver of the gift, it can be a source of anxiety to parents. We are often asked to recommend gifts or give advice about giving gifts. We have created this little guide to provide you with some guidance and suggestions that may assist you as you approach giving in your family. We hope you find the information useful and will be encouraged along your parenting journey.

Birth to 6 Years

During the years from birth to 6, children have periods of sensitivity for developing certain areas. Your child is passing through periods that are sensitive for developing skills for movement (both gross and fine motor), language, order and independence. First and foremost your child is an explorer of the world around her! And she explores with all of her senses. She wants to see, feel, move, hear, and taste the objects in her world and discover how they are used. Your child's imagination is not yet fully developed, so toys grounded in reality are best. When considering what toys and activities to include in her life we recommend that you evaluate each possibility and whether or not it will assist in her development.

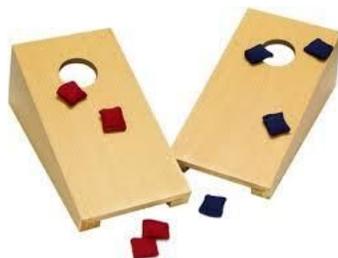
As you make your choices, please keep a few qualities in mind. Consider the size of the toys and it's parts, as your child should be able to safely use the toy independently. Purchase sturdy, beautiful toys made of real materials, as these will give your child an enhanced sensory experience. When considering any toy or activity look at its intended purpose carefully. It should have a clear purpose, and opportunity for manipulation by your child. It should be something she can do on her own once shown how and not require adult direction. Is it trying to do too many things? While a toy that sings, dances, and does the laundry may be exciting, it is probably over stimulating and limited in what your child can do with it. Evaluate based on your child's development of order, language, motor skills and sensory needs, as well as their ability to use it independently.

Recommended Gifts for Ages Birth to 6

Many outdoor toys are wonderful for providing opportunities to develop coordinated movement. There are sensory experiences involved just by being outside. The textures, smells, and sounds are all around. Toddlers love to run and chase, climb, swing, spin, push and pull. Outdoor toys are perfect for these activities. Some examples are swings, rocker boards, sand boxes, water tables, tricycles, and balance bikes. A wonderful gift is a playset for the backyard which may include slides, climbing walls, monkey bars, or other apparatus.



Toys that can be used both indoors and out are a good choice. Some examples of these are crawl tubes, trampolines, sit n spins, balance beams and family games such as lawn bowling, corn hole, horseshoes, etc.



Books are always a wonderful gift for your child! Books should have beautiful art and real pictures, simple stories. At this age they should be reality based. One of your child's main goals during this period of development is to figure out how things work. Fantasy and things like superheroes have their place with older children, but are confusing to young children. When they are older and have a firmly established sense of reality then pretending that animals talk and that toys have a life of their own is great fun.

Musical toys such as drums, xylophones, tambourines, guitars, rattles, and other instruments will be loved for years by your child.

Remember your child is developing their hand strength and fine motor skills, so activities like playdough, small crayons, paints, glue, an easel, sewing cards, stringing beads, building blocks, stacking toys, sorting games, puzzles, age-appropriate legos, and wooden train sets are good choices. Toys your child can push and pull around the house are great for developing gross motor skills. Toys that allow your child to do something that causes something else to happen are fun and exciting, such as a ball drop or a wooden racetrack. As your child explores the world around them, dress-up clothes are a way for them to extend this experience.



Things to Avoid Birth to Six

Anything electronic should wait until your child is older. While there is much clever marketing out there trying to get you to think that your toddler needs a child's version of an iPad, he doesn't! There is not an app or program that can give your child the same experience of a three dimensional object that he can manipulate himself in many different ways. This far exceeds moving something around on a screen, pushing buttons and hearing electronic responses. There is plenty of time later in life to enjoy those, and they serve no purpose in brain development. In fact, there is growing research that they can cause problems with development.

Six to Twelve

The years between six and twelve are characterized by an ever expanding imagination, development of their reasoning ability, and increasing capacity for abstract thought. It is also a crucial period for social and moral development. They have a strong sense of justice, and perceived fairness which makes this the perfect time to involve your child in giving to others. Whether that is a physical gift or one of service, involve them in all aspects of this process.

Fascination with the world around them can make it both easier and harder for parents of children this age in terms of gifts. Because they show great interest in many things, finding a gift they are interested in will likely be easy. However, now that they often want to be with their friends, they may not play on the beautiful swing set, until they have a buddy over.

Recommended Gifts for Ages 6 to 12

Gifts that are used outside are often high on the list, some they can use individually and those that are great for the family, or when they have friends over. Items which can be simple and enjoyed sometimes individually (or with others) include a jump rope, frisbee, hula hoop, bicycle, basketball and net, other sports equipment or even a Ninja Course. Ideas that will build connections with family or friends and support your child's growing social development include games such as volleyball, cornhole, croquet, bocce ball, horseshoes, and badminton. Lessons for outdoor activities they enjoy such as horseback riding also make excellent gifts.



Gifts
build



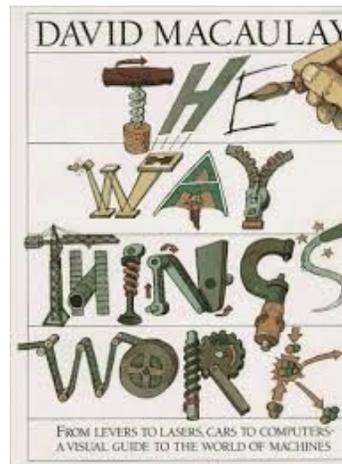
that
their



imagination and creativity are excellent choices, whether that is following an interest they have shown or items that allow for open ended exploration and creative expression. Numerous kits to explore art techniques or science concepts are available and it is easy to build your own. For example, if your child has shown interest in stars, provide books at their level, tickets to a planetarium, and even a simple telescope. For the budding scientist, a really good book on science with activities, and the tools and supplies needed, perhaps membership to Discovery Place or a summer camp experience.



Children this age want to know how things work, this can lead sometimes to them taking things apart and trying to put them back together. While it may not sound like a conventional gift, giving them something that you approve of them taking apart and the tools to use is actually a fantastic gift. It needs to come with lessons and rules involving safety and if it includes books and instructions all the better.



There are other tools and skills they will need to develop during these years and introducing them as gifts or presents acknowledges that your child is ready for this responsibility or skill. If your child has yet to master telling time on an analog clock, it is time to get one. A fitbit, or digital watch should not come until they have mastered the analog form. Nice stationary or thank you cards, and an address book lets them know that the responsibility of thanking the gift giver

should become theirs and this is a nice way to help that transition. Cooking tools, apron, and a good cook book allow fun exploration of life skills. Games that work on academic skills such as math or typing can be enticing. Enjoyable ways to work on language and writing skills can come from items like mad libs, and calligraphy sets. Mazes, coloring, and drawing books, build fine motor control as does sewing and working with clay. These are all things you can present as fun activities and gifts.

Books always make great gifts, whether they are ones that follow a child's interest, or ones for you to share together. Your child's guide can make specific suggestions, and we also have a recommend book list available in Parent's Web. Magazine subscriptions are a gift that gives all year and children love to get things in the mail. Some options to check out: National Geographic, National Geographic for Kids, Spider, Ranger Rick, Zoo Books, Highlights, Dig Into History, Faces: People, Places, Culture.

It might be time for a special piece of furniture that is of quality and will be theirs to take with them when they grow up and have their own home. A beautiful book shelf or desk are fine examples.

Excellent choices are also games that build family relationships as well as connections with friends. Many of these also help the child develop reasoning and strategy skills at the same time. There are old classics such as Sorry, Monopoly, Chess, Backgammon, Checkers, UNO (and other card games), and Sequence, as well as some that are a bit newer such as Blokus, Ticket to Ride, and Settlers of Catan.



Family experiences are gifts that your children will remember for years to come. Wrapping up tickets to a show, or concert, or membership to places you will enjoy going to together, give your child something to look forward to as well as some experience in delayed gratification, and patience.

Things to Avoid Six to Twelve

Keep in mind that their bodies are growing almost as quickly as their minds and avoid gifts that are passive. One way to think of it: ***active gifts build active children, passive gifts build passive children.***

Be prepared to make and enforce rules around the use of electronics. If you are not going to be able to limit time spent to a healthy amount, you should consider not having this in your home. Do your homework on the effect of electronic use on the developing brain and body, share this information with your child and get his or her agreement on rules. Then expect to have to reinforce them as children of this age naturally test out the rules and the boundaries regularly.

Twelve to Eighteen

Montessori has identified the adolescent as the societal newborn. It is the time in which they are leaving childhood and becoming an adult, and thus preparing to be a new member of society. Their work cannot be tokenistic, as they will immediately see it as being unable to fulfil their needs. Instead, it must be related to learning how they might choose to live in society. The adolescent needs a myriad of opportunities to experience certain aspects of adult life, which must include a level of trust, freedom, and responsibility, the three pillars of any healthy adult human relationship.

Recommended Gifts for Ages Twelve to Eighteen

To this end, the adolescent would appreciate gifts that are not tokenistic, but ones that show an appreciation for the new adult that they are becoming, or may wish to become. Choices here might include: mechanic's tool kit, sewing machine, classes in baking, automotive or other trades work, visit to an archery or skeet range, and challenging model kits. Adolescence is also a time in which the need for creative and physical expression is deeply felt, as it helps to process the inner turbulence of morphing into an adult. Choices here might include: portable watercolor set, sculpting kit, musical instrument and lessons, drama classes, painting classes, tickets to concerts, performances, artistic installations, sporting equipment and lessons such as skiing. All of the above mentioned possibilities should be made or chosen from tools, materials, or experiences that are of an adult level.

Things to Consider Before Buying Any Gift

These are a few questions to ask yourself before you purchase a gift for your child:

- Why am I considering purchasing this?
- Is this a quality gift?
- Will this gift likely be in the donate pile next year?
- Am I feeling pressured to buy it? If so:
 - Is this pressure from my child? (“Everyone else has one.”)
 - Is the pressure from society? Neighbors, Family, Friends?
- Do I just need something to give them?
- Am I concerned about whether or not my children are receiving an “equal” amount?
- Am I concerned that I’m not giving or spending enough?
- Is this something you wanted when you were a child?
- Is this something you wish you’d had as a child?
- Is this going to build connections with other?
- Is this gift consistent with my families values?

Recommended Resources

These are a just a few places that you might look for ideas as well.

Hearthsong: <https://www.hearthsong.com/>

Melissa and Doug: <https://www.melissaanddoug.com/>

For Small Hands: <https://www.forsmallhands.com/>

Fat Brain Toys: <https://www.fatbraintoy.com/>

More About the Subject of Giving:

If you’d like to read more here are a couple of sites to visit with good articles on the topic:

This insightful article from Her View From Home talks about things you want to give your child that are gifts, but not the kind that you wrap up:

<https://herviewfromhome.com/10-very-montessori-gifts-to-give-your-children-this-christmas/>

Montessori Inspired Gift Giving:

<http://ageofmontessori.org/montessori-inspired-gift-giving/>

This article from How We Montessori takes a look at how to discuss with friends and family members about the kinds of gifts you would and would not like your children to receive.

<https://www.howwemontessori.com/how-we-montessori/2017/03/tips-on-how-to-talk-to-friends-and-family-about-childrens-gifts-and-presents.html>