



## Toys To Treasure

Children love to play, and it's vital to their development. Piaget, a famous psychologist, said, "Play is a child's work." And that work is fun for children. It may lead to a decision to become an astronaut, chef, architect, teacher, travel agent, firefighter, or mechanic. Through play, children can indulge in quiet activities such as art or reading. Or they can stretch their thinking skills with games and manipulatives, or even challenge their physical bodies with balls, hoops, and riding toys.

### Parents Provide a Safety Net

- ✓ Pay attention to age recommendations on toys--they're provided for good reasons.
- ✓ Be aware of younger children in the family playing with older children's toys.
- ✓ Avoid toys with small parts that young children could inhale or swallow.
- ✓ Select soft and cloth toys that are machine washable.
- ✓ Make sure all electrical toys are approved by Underwriters Laboratory (UL).

### Parents Play, Too

When joining the play, let children set the stage and direction. Think outside the box, though, and be imaginative. You might have fond memories of favorite toys, but your child will likely have different favorites. And children play with the same toys in dozens of ways. Remember, too that



play is most useful and fun when it's spontaneous, so avoid using playtime to quiz and test children on their skills.



### Parents Provide Variety

- All children love art supplies. They can begin by leaving their imaginative markings on plain paper and graduate to coloring within the lines much later.
- Rattles, nesting toys, and pounding and push toys are treasured by infants and toddlers.
- Books are an important way for children to experience the world and to learn language. Books provide meaningful print that start children on the reading journey.
- Manipulative toys such as puzzles, pegboards, and blocks build small muscles and imagination, not to mention problem-solving skills.
- Musical toys are fun for all ages.
- Wheel toys, balls, and toys such as hula-hoops and kites provide vital opportunities for physical and outside play.
- Dolls, puppets, stuffed animals, and dress-up clothes enhance dramatic play.
- Toy trucks and cars provide role-play opportunities and build large and small muscles.
- Games from Chutes and Ladders to Pictionary entertain children for hours.

### Trivia Fun

- Mr. Potato Head started out on the toy journey in 1952 as a set of 28 features that could accessorize a real potato!
- Hula hoops introduced in 1959 sold 25 million in the first four months and 100 million within two years. They were originally made out of wood.
- Mattel introduced Hot Wheels in 1968. If every Hot Wheels vehicle ever produced was lined up and placed front to rear, they would circle the earth more than two times.
- Lincoln Logs have been a classic construction toy since 1916. The inventor was, John Lloyd Wright. He was inspired by the interlocking beams his father, Frank Lloyd Wright, used in building Tokyo's Imperial Hotel. The toy was named for Abraham Lincoln.
- The teddy bear was produced in 1902 after the president, Teddy Roosevelt, an avid hunter, refused to shoot a young bear while on a hunting trip in Mississippi.

# PERSONAL PARENTING

## Whole Wheat Brownie Bites

- 1/4 cup whole wheat pastry flour
- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup soy milk
- 1/4 cup agave nectar
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup bittersweet chocolate, broken into chunks
- 1 large banana, peeled and mashed
- 1/4 tsp. canola oil

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Combine the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt. Mix well; set aside. Combine the soy milk, agave nectar, and vanilla in a small saucepan. Heat over medium heat until warm. Add the chocolate; cook and stir until melted. Stir in the banana; whisk until well blended. Remove from heat; whisk in the dry ingredients. Grease a 9-inch square glass baking dish with the canola oil. Spread the mixture into the dish. Bake for 20 minutes or until set. Transfer dish to a wire rack; cool completely. Cut into squares. Printed with permission from *You Raising Your Child: The Owner's Manual from First Breath to First Grade* by Michael L. Roizen, MD, and Mehmet C. Oz, MD



## Swapping Toys

With a little planning by parents and children, kids can exchange toys with their friends. You can decide on what to swap, how long to swap, and who to swap with. Either way, it's fun and it has many benefits. Swapping toys gives parents an opportunity to find out what types of toys their children really enjoy playing with before purchasing. And exchanging toys reinforces the concept of sharing to children.



## Boost Brain Power

Pam Schiller, author of *Start Smart: Building Brain Power in the Early Years* answers questions about brain development in a straightforward manner that parents will appreciate. The book includes activities that contribute to the future capacity of the brain.



## Color Mixing Experiment

Arrange a few cups or bowls on a table covered with newspaper. Fill the containers with water that is tinted with food coloring. Give your smock-covered child a baster and let her transfer the colored water from one container to another.

Seeing that yellow mixed with blue creates green is an interesting discovery. This is also a great activity for small muscles. You can use an eyedropper instead of a baster and an egg carton instead of bowls for separating the colors.



## A Path to Well-Being

The Cleveland Clinic developed an imaginative way to support parents in their efforts to create health and well-being in children. Try the "5 to Go!" system.

- \* 5 servings of fruits and veggies a day
- \* 4 servings of nonfat dairy a day, for calcium and vitamin D3
- \* 3 compliments (give and get them, to create a positive environment)
- \* 2 or fewer hours of screen time
- \* 1 hour or more of exercise
- \* 0 sweetened beverages

# Winter Reading

*Me ... Jane* is a picture book written and illustrated by Patrick McDonnell. It's about the life of Dr. Jane Goodall, who dreamed of growing up and living in Africa helping animals. She was a curious child, even sneaking into Grandma Nutt's chicken coop to see how eggs were miraculously produced. She conducted her experiments with her beloved stuffed chimpanzee, Jubilee, always at her side. This book is so beautifully and simply illustrated that it takes your breath away. Some of Jane's own sketches and childhood reports are in the book. Children can learn much more about Dr. Jane Goodall by going to [www.rootsandshoots.org](http://www.rootsandshoots.org) and [janegoodall.org](http://janegoodall.org).

*Old Bear and His Cub* is written and illustrated by Olivier Dunrea. Old Bear is a wise parent. He knows what's best for Little Cub—what he should eat for a healthy body, how high he can climb, and what he should wear on a wintry day to stay warm. But Little Cub is a wise little cub, and he knows how to make Old Bear feel better when he comes down with a cold. What a playful twist on the child-parent relationship!

*The Busy Life of Ernestine Buckmeister* is written by Linda Ravin Lodding and illustrated by Suzanne Beaky. Ernestine is a busy child—so busy that Nanny O'Dear has to keep her on a schedule every day of the week. Will it be tuba with Mr. Umpah, yodeling with Little Old Lady Hoo, or perhaps sculpting with Clay Lumpkin? There's lots to do in life that's lots of fun, but Mr. and Mrs. Buckmeister find out the hard way that too much stuff to do, and not enough time for play and relaxation, can cause anyone to be a bit frazzled. This is a charming book that parents can laugh with and learn from as they're reminded of what it's like to be a kid.



## Winter Art

### Winter Weaving

Go on a walk and find an interesting tree branch. Give children different weights and colors of yarn. Tape one end of the yarn to the branch where the weaving will start and let children keep weaving in and out until they have a beautiful winter weaving suitable for hanging in their room. Fun things to add as they weave are beads and feathers. The more colors and textures of yarn, the more interesting and intricate the design. Up, down, around, inside, outside—this is a great time to use these descriptive words.



## Winter Cooking

### Snowball Peaches

This is a dessert that's packed with nutrition. An added bonus is that it's simple enough for kids to make. It's very festive with the mint leaf on top.

- 1 package (3 oz.) cream cheese, softened
- 1 Tbsp. apricot preserves
- 1/2 cup pineapple tidbits, drained
- 2 cans (15 oz. each) peach halves, drained
- Leaf lettuce
- Fresh mint leaf

In a small mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese and preserves until blended. Stir in the pineapple. Place the peaches cut side up on a lettuce-lined serving plate. Fill each peach half with the cream cheese mixture. Garnish with the mint. Makes 8 servings