

## TOYS FOR EARLY YEARS CHILDREN WITH SEND - TOP TIPS

Each child is a unique and special individual. In order to help promote child development adults often present toys for children to explore and investigate. Toys come in a variety of shapes and sizes and are often designed to stimulate and engage children in a variety of activities. It is important that toys provide children with the opportunity to succeed and not give rise to a sense of frustration.



Children need to play - play helps them to develop and find out about the world. Toys are an important part of play, e.g. home corner, small world.

During the first twelve months babies learn how to control their bodies in a purposeful way, e.g. swiping actions develop into grasping and releasing toys. By two years of age children have progressed from crawling or shuffling to walking and running. The average three year old can pedal a wheeled toy, throw and kick a ball plus walk upstairs independently.

It is important to keep play areas tidy - a child with a physical disability may have less control of their motor movements so could trip or fall over stray toys.

Things to consider when buying toys for a child with a physical disability:

### *Activation:*

- Are there lots of complex steps to activate the toy?
- What is the method of activation - push, turn, twist, is it easy to move?
- What is the force required to activate - light pressure is easier.
- Will the toy provide a challenge without frustration?



### *Adjustability:*

- Can the toy be adjusted, e.g. sound volume, speed, level of difficulty?

### *Child's individual characteristics:*

- Does the toy provide activities that reflect both developmental and chronological ages?
- Does it reflect the child's interests?

### *Current popularity:*

- Is it a popular toy that most children would like, e.g. teddy bear.
- Does it link with other activities, e.g. TV programme, film, book, clothing?



### *Multisensory appeal:*

- Are there bright, contrasting colours, which will be easier to see?
- Does the toy respond with lights, sounds, or movement?
- Does it have an aroma or scent, e.g. vanilla ball?
- Is there texture which may make the toy easier to handle, e.g. koosh ball?

*Opportunities for success:*

Can play be open-ended with no definite right or wrong?  
Is it adaptable to the child's individual style, ability and pace?

*Self-expression:*

Does the toy allow for creativity, uniqueness and choice-making?  
Will it give the child experience with a variety of media?

*Safety and durability:*

Consider the child's size and strength in relation to the toy's durability.

Does the toy have moisture resistance?

Can it be washed and cleaned?



*Potential for interaction:*

Will the child be an active participant during use?

Will the toy encourage social engagement with others?

*Using the toy:*

Can the toy be used in a variety of positions such as side-lying or on a wheelchair tray?

Will the toy be easy to store?

When choosing toys it is useful to look at age guidelines as well as safety warnings to enable the selection of toys suitable for the child. Some children with special educational needs and / or disability are able to use age appropriate toys whilst some children may need to consolidate their learning by using toys from a previous stage of development or may require adults to support their play, e.g. placing toys nearby to reduce fatigue.



The setting Leader, acting on behalf of the Manager is responsible for the purchase of new toys and usage of existing toys;

- Cleaning toys - a rota-system is useful, include dressing-up clothes.
- Construction toys - should be of a quality that is well made and will withstand play, i.e. unbreakable and have no sharp edges.
- Home-made toys - should be inspected and used with discretion.
- Maintenance - toys should be regularly checked for safety.
- Infection control - toys should be hygienically cleaned in order to avoid a risk of infection, sickness or contamination.
- Second-hand toys - should be thoroughly inspected, then used with discretion.
- Suppliers - toys should be bought from reputable dealers, e.g. specialist toy shops, well-known high street chains.
- Safety marks - toys should carry recognised quality marks, e.g. The Lion Mark.



## Safety marks:



*The Lion Mark* - means consumers can be assured that a toy which bears the Lion Mark has been made by a member of the British Toy and Hobby Association (BTHA) who believes in making good quality, safe toys.



*The CE Mark* - is required by law on all toys sold within the European Union. It does not indicate quality or safety.



*Age warning symbols* - show that a toy is not safe for children under a certain age. This warning is often given because toys contain small parts that could cause a baby or toddler to choke.

Toys presented to children should be clean and safe for use and should be complete (not missing any parts):

- Battery operated toys - should be inspected for sign of battery leakage, do not mix old and new batteries as the old ones could overheat.
- Cot toys - should have strings that are no longer than 20cm (8") as a longer string could trap or strangle the baby or child.
- Fabric material toys - e.g. rag doll, cloth books should be regularly machine-washed using biological powder.
- Furry toys - toys that have long fur or hair should not be given to babies under one year old as they may cause choking.
- Garden toys - including trikes, prams should be sturdy and of good quality, nuts and bolts, etc should be checked regularly.
- Inclusive toys - are available from a variety of suppliers, e.g. Lego, Playmobile - doll size crutches, wheelchair.
- Noisy toys - could damage hearing if toys are excessively loud, do not let children hold noisy toys against their ears.
- Plastic toys - will need to be sterilised by wiping with an antibacterial cloth or cleaned in a dishwasher.
- Sand / Water tray - offers an opportunity for a wheelchair user to play with the sand or water, at an accessible height.

