

Quality, not quantity, counts in the serious world of play



Pat Bordman

Third of a five-part series

Toys are like clothes. Kids outgrow them every few months. This makes toy buying not only expensive, but never-ending. Toys must, therefore, be selected with care and attention. Fortunately, children usually give clues as to their interests and abilities.

There are several questions to ask yourself when searching for playthings for your children. First, what do they play with most often, enjoy doing the most and what types of toys do they turn to when bored, tired, or restless?

Second, what toys do they have and enjoy that can be expanded on?

Third, what toys can be added that can be played with by more than one child at a time?

QUALITY COUNTS. Children don't care how much a toy costs. But the toy that falls apart soon after purchase can be a very disheartening experience.

Be sure the toy you select conforms to safety standards with no obvious sharp edges or points, sound makers that can damage hearing, projectiles that can damage eyes, and electric parts that don't meet mandatory safety requirements.

The most important consideration when buying toys is their suitability. Children from ages 5 to 8 vary considerably in interests and in abilities. Within each age level some children may have highly developed muscle control or finely tuned world perceptions while others are just beginning.

THE 5- AND 6-YEAR-OLD is a squirmy, wiggly,

highly active personality. Games with rules are liked, but complicated strategy and foresight are still beyond grasp. He or she likes to be first, to win, to be at the center of things, with erratic friendships.

By 7 the child has become more serious and reflective and takes pleasure in solitary pursuits. By 8 friendships are very important, but there is a definite separation of the sexes. The 8-year-old is curious and can be quite a collector. He enjoys dramatic play because of a greater self awareness.

With such vast differences, in so few years, individual toys must be flexible enough to last through many stages of growth.

Suggestions: roller skates, jump ropes, dolls to dress and undress, trains, records, books, board games, sleds, kites, racing cars, decals and stickers, sewing equipment, more workbench tools, and puppets to appeal to the imitator present throughout the stages.

Remember it is not the number of toys a child has, but whether toys fit the needs.

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Mrs. Bordman welcomes suggestions and comments. Write her c/o the Observer & Eccentric Newspaper, 38251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150.

• PATRICIA BORDMAN



Children develop self awareness by age 8 and their play, reflecting energy and enthusiasm, becomes more dramatic.

consumer mallbag

A living holiday tree that will grow on you

Is it possible to buy a live evergreen for use as a Christmas tree and then to plant it in the yard? I hate to spend money for a tree that only lasts a few weeks when they are so expensive. Is there anything special I need to know to make it work?

rootball: Keep the hole from freezing by lining it with straw.

● Move the tree indoors gradually — to a garage or sheltered area outside, to an unheated basement, and finally to your living room.

● Keep it there no more than a week, out of direct sunlight, and away from radiators or heat vents.

● Big lights can damage your tree. Use only miniature lights.

● Water it, but only enough to keep the rootball from drying. Too much water, coupled with indoor warmth, may encourage new growth. That new growth would suffer winter damage when you move the tree outdoors.

● After you have enjoyed the tree for the holidays, reverse the procedure and take it outside gradually.

In the interest of ecology and economy many people have used live evergreens as Christmas trees. You can become a part of this group and enjoy your tree for many years. The following guidelines are offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Get recommendations from your local nursery for suitable varieties. Some of the more popular choices for a living Christmas tree are Scotch pine, Douglas fir, balsam fir and blue spruce. Proper handling is important.

● Buy a tree that is balled-in-burlap, and one that is not too big to handle easily.

● If possible, prepare the hole in advance when the ground is easy to dig. Dig it in at least half again as big as the

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