

Top Ten Tips for Buying Toys

These are the questions that the play experts at the National Lekotek Center ask when choosing developmentally appropriate toys for kids with special needs. The National Lekotek Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to making play accessible for children with disabilities. www.lekotek.org



1. MULTI-SENSORY APPEAL

Does the toy respond with lights, sounds or movements to engage the child? Are there contrasting colours? Does it have a scent? Is there texture?

2. METHOD OF ACTIVATION

Will the toy provide a challenge without frustration? What is the force required to activate? What are the number complexity of steps required to activate?

3. PLACES THE TOY WILL BE USED

Will the toy be easy to store? Is there space in the home? Can the toy be used in a variety of positions such as side-lying or on a wheelchair tray?

4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS

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

5. CURRENT POPULARITY

Is it a toy that will help the child with special needs feel like "any other kid"? Does it tie in with other activities like books and art sets that promote other forms of play?

6. SELF-EXPRESSION

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

7. ADJUSTABILITY

Does it have adjustable height, sound volume, speed and level of difficulty?

8. CHILD'S INDIVIDUAL ABILITIES

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

9. SAFETY AND DURABILITY

Does the toy fit with the child's size and strength? Does it have moisture resistance? Are the toy and its parts sized appropriately? Can it be washed and cleaned?

10. POTENTIAL FOR INTERACTION

Will the child be an active participant during use? Will the toy encourage social engagement with others?