

## Holidays – choosing educational gifts for kids

It is almost that time of year when the excitement of the holidays takes off and children begin dreaming of the wonder and possibilities (presents!) of the season. Television commercials, social platforms, and influencers are all inundating us with things to buy. How do you know what toy to buy that would stand the test of time?

Educators say grown-ups should search for toys that spur a child's imagination, creativity, and interest, while at the same time, inspire developmental and educational growth. Toys can be a pleasurable way to encourage fine motor, gross motor, eye hand coordination, tactile exploration, sensory development, coding, number sense, spatial reasoning, increased attention span, problem solving, mathematical concepts, etc. Babies and toddlers need toys that they can hold and love as well as toys allow them to move around while crawling, scooting, standing, or taking steps. Preschoolers need toys that are open-ended with many possibilities, which encourage their imagination and creativity for role playing and pretending. Look for toys that can grow with your child, for example; blocks they can sort by colors and shapes, and then later build into 3D designs. Older preschoolers, kindergarteners, and first grade children love to build and create by building with blocks too, for instance, making a house and adding additional pieces to form a city. If your child has sensitivities to sounds and lights, for example, search for toys that are quiet and do not require batteries.

How do grown-ups know where to start looking for quality toys? A great place to start is with an institution that supports family learning like The Children's Museum of Indianapolis! The Children's Museum's mission is *to create extraordinary learning experiences across the arts, sciences, and humanities that have the power to transform the lives of children and families*. Come see what our staff in the galleries and in the store are playing with.

The Museum Store sources toys that continue your museum experience from current exhibits (a new Dinosphere is coming!) to your living room. Completing a puzzle is a great way for families to work together. The store offers dinosaur themed floor puzzles with large pieces that help young children develop their spatial reasoning and fine motor skills, and a variety of smaller piece puzzles for the older kids. Dinosaur figures that encourage imaginative play and a curiosity to learn more about these extinct creatures, are also popular. To see a list of favorite, fun and educational toys voted on by kids during our October Kid Tested-Kid Approved event, visit [childrensmuseum.org](http://childrensmuseum.org) for some great shopping ideas. Happy Holidays!