

Child's Play: Toys and Games for Cooperation

All toys are not created equal. Some toys help children learn valuable social skills and promote learning goals in your classroom. This list can help you make decisions about the best types of toys to purchase for your classroom.

Toys that Encourage Cooperation

- Simple cooperative board games:
 - “Max: A Cooperative Game” (Family Pastimes)
 - “The Secret Door” (Family Pastimes)
 - “Hoot Owl Hoot!” (Peaceable Kingdom)
 - “Count Your Chickens” (Peaceable Kingdom)

- Simple cooperative movement games:
 - Cooperative musical chairs: Set up just like traditional musical chairs, except now each child must find a place to sit. Encourage children to share, sit on laps, and get creative about helping their friends find a place to sit. Each time the music stops, remove a chair and help children think of ways to sit.
 - Balloon toss: Inflate a few balloons. Encourage children to work together to keep the balloons in the air (only safe in school-age programs).
 - Wagons pull: Encourage children to take turns pulling each other in a wagon.
 - Parachute games: Use small or large parachutes and encourage children to work together to keep a ball bouncing in the middle.

- Classroom Toys
 - Dominoes
 - Blocks
 - Balance rocker weights
 - Ramps for toy cars

Toys that Encourage Imagination

- Dress up clothes
- Simple dolls
- Art materials (clay, paint, buttons, collage materials)

Simple Toys that Encourage Literacy and Language

- Alphabet magnets, beads, stamps, blocks
- Puppets
- Writing materials: stationary, pens, pencils, stamps, envelopes
- Flannel board materials for stories
- Recycled materials from home: phone books, cereal boxes, cook books, instruction manuals
- Dry-erase boards

Simple Toys that Encourage Math and Problem Solving

- Geo-boards with rubber or cloth bands
- Tangram puzzles
- Dominoes
- Timers
- Scoops and measuring cups
- Empty boxes and tubes
- Measuring tapes and rulers
- Calendars
- Dice
- Collections of “stuff” for sorting: buttons, stickers, toy cars, seashells, leaves, food labels

Simple Toys that Encourage Science and Exploration

- Stethoscope
- Magnifying glass
- Mirrors
- Beakers, tubes, pitchers
- Light table
- Magnets
- Collections of items with different scents and textures
- Collection of natural items: leaves, tree branches and stumps, grass, seeds

Simple Toys that Encourage Social Studies

- Maps
- Blueprints
- Blocks
- Board games
- Play money and cash register
- Mirrors
- Timers
- Clothes in a variety of sizes: baby clothes, adult clothes
- Job uniforms and props for dramatic play