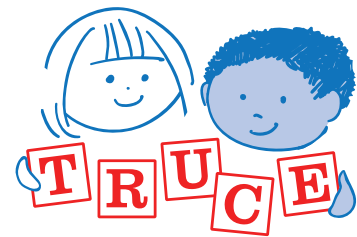


TRUCE 2011-12 Annual Toy Selection Guide:



Teachers Resisting Unhealthy
Children's Entertainment

Toys of Value and Toys to Avoid

This annual review helps parents choose toys that promote healthy play and avoid toys that undermine it. In this age of technology, media and marketing to children, it is especially important to make informed toy choices. For more complete information about dealing with today's play and media, go to: www.truceteachers.org to get our TRUCE Action Guides.

Ideas to consider before you shop:

- **Be thoughtful.** Read our guides to be better prepared, and to make good decisions.
- **Avoid shopping all together.** Pass on toys that older children have outgrown or plan a family experience together like going for a hike, a bike ride, or helping out a neighbor.
- **Be a deal finder at a yard sale.** Sometimes you'll be rewarded with classic toys that just need a little bit of clean up to look as good as new.
- **Be creative.** See our *Shoe Box Gifts* Section in our Toys, Play and Young Children Action Guide (<http://truceteachers.org/guides.html>) to create a personal gift. From art sets to gardening, you can customize a gift that best fits the child. Or try devising your own board games.
- **Be local.** Can the toy be made locally? If so, you can avoid fuel waste and pollution.

Toys of Value

The toys listed in each category below are examples of toys that support healthy play. These are intended to be used as guidelines for making your purchasing decisions, not as product endorsements.

Let's pretend!

Toys that promote dramatic play such as:

- **Tub Puppets – Rich Frog** All ages \$12
Finger puppets in the bathtub allow children to make up their own stories.
- **Vet Case Veterinarian Kit – ELC** 3 & up \$30
Includes different supplies for children to pretend to be a veterinarian.

- **Play Silks – Bella Luna toys** All ages \$15
Silks in different colors nurture the senses, and encourage children's pretend play.



Toys of Value Continued

Let's use our little fingers! Toys that promote manipulative play such as:

- **Shape Sorting Cube – Melissa and Doug** 2 & up \$15
A wooden cube with different colored shapes to fit inside.
- **Crepe Rubber Puzzle – Lauri** 18 mo & up \$10
Crepe rubber shapes that fit together to form a puzzle, supporting fine motor development.
- **Wooden Ramp Racer, JR – Young Explorers** 18 mo & up \$25
Solid wood ramp with four sturdy cars for racing and flipping down the four levels of track.



Let's take turns! Toys that promote game playing such as:

- **Domino Build – Mega Bloks** 3 & up \$10
Children can practice matching colors and shapes or play dominoes.
- **Miss Weather – Colorforms** 3 & up \$10
Large pieces allow young children to manipulate, and focus on the weather. Allows for conversation and language development.
- **Block Head – Pressman** 6 & up, or all ages \$13
Differently shaped pieces pose a stacking challenge to children playing together or alone.



Let's be artists! Toys that promote creative arts such as:

- **Stockmar Model Beeswax – Bella Luna Toys** 3 & up \$15
Modeling material that is easy to use, keeps its color, and can be reused.

- **Window Paper – Bella Luna Toys** 3 & up \$9
Cut out all kinds of shapes to make stars and other creations that stick to glass.
- **Aquadoodle – Umagic** All ages \$22
A reusable floor mat filled with water that children can color on with friends or alone.

Let's move! Toys that promote physical play such as:

- **Mini Bowling Set – Enor** All ages \$6
Five red and five blue plastic bowling pins and two mini plastic bowling balls in a storage bag.
- **Basketball Set – Little Tikes** Toddlers \$30
Adjustable height and toddler age appropriate basket designed for indoor or outdoor play.
- **Skyball – Maui Toys** All ages \$8
A ball that can bounce up to 75 feet for a variety of indoor or outdoor games.



Toy Tips for Infants

Remember, you are a baby's best gift. Spend time interacting with your baby about what you hear and see as you walk around your home and neighborhood—singing, touching, talking.



- **Winkel Toy – the Land of Nod** 0-12 mo \$16
Bright, bendable plastic tubes create color, form and sound (it rattles). Refrigerate it and provide relief for teething babies.
- **Sophie the Giraffe** 0-12 mo \$25
It squeaks, is flexible, soft, and easy to grip.
- **Triangle Teether – Haba Toys** 0-12 mo \$10
The two linked triangles provide children with something to explore, while the wood softly clicks and the triangles snap back into shape.

Toys and Trends to Avoid

The toys listed in each category below are dramatic examples that illustrate harmful toy trends. When you shop for toys this year, make sure to ask yourself if the toy fits into one of these categories. If it does, then consider another choice using our recommended Toys of Value list.



Bang, Bang...You're dead! Toys that make violence the focus of the play.

Often linked to violent media rated for older children, these toys teach that violence is fun, easy and the way to solve problems.

- **Nerf N-Strike Raider Rapid Fire CS-35 Dart Blaster (Nerf)** 6 & up \$30

The box promises the "Blaster is a great piece of office weaponry." This toy's main function is to shoot Nerf darts at "unsuspecting victims."

- **Transformers Toys**

These toys, linked to violent PG 13 movies, highlight a growing trend to market toys to very young children and then make the toys increasingly violent, as children get older.

- **Transformers ATV Ride-On – Optimus Prime (Moose Mountain)** 12 mo & up \$50

Four-wheeled ride-on push car that makes loud electronic sounds.

- **Rescue Bots Playskool Heroes – Optimus Prime Fire Station Play Set (Hasbro)** 3 & up \$40
A fire station that is a robot in disguise with light, sounds and phrases.
- **Dark of the Moon-Robo Power Bash Bots, Bumblebee vs. Megatron (Hasbro)** 3 & up \$15
Two convertible action figures-cars that bash into each other.

So Sexy, So Soon: Toys that make sexiness & appearance the focus of play.

Channeling girls' play into looking and acting sexy, these toys promote a harmful standard of what it means to be a girl.



- **Disney Princess: My First Soft Bedtime Princess Dolls and Travel with Me Princess Dolls. (Tolly Tots)** 2 & up \$15

Dolls dressed in pink with tiaras to focus very young girls' traditional baby doll play on appearance and gender divisions.

- **Barbie Fabulous Fashion Projector (Mattel)** 3 & up \$20

Projects silhouettes of Barbie on paper for girls to trace and color. Promotes a focus on appearance and fashion, not play.

- **Monster High Dolls (Mattel)*** 6 & up \$22
- 2011 TOADY Award Nominee** Dolls with dangerously thin bodies and highly provocative attire that normalize eating disorders and early sexuality.



Toys and Trends to Avoid Continued

Media Mania: Toys and games linked to media.

Encourages children to imitate what they see on the screen instead of using their own ideas and imagination.



- **Duplos Disney Pixar Cars 2 Series (Lego)** 2 & up \$15

This toy dictates what to build and how to play because of its connection to the Disney movie *Cars*.

- **Dora the Explorer Playdoh (Hasbro)** 3 & up \$6

Playdoh with molds to make figures of Dora and her friends focuses activity on Dora instead of creative play.

- **Chutes & Ladders Super Hero Squad (Milton Bradley)** 3 & up \$15

Draws preschoolers into the superhero play and media culture using a well-loved traditional game.

Bells and Whistles: Children's books linked to push buttons & electronics.

Toys masquerading as books teach children to expect books to entertain. They undermine learning how to make meaning out of pictures and print, vital aspects of learning to read.



- **Baby Einstein Discover the Day Lift-a-Flap Sound Book (Publications Int'l)** 18 mo & up \$9

Makes unsubstantiated claims to teach "matching and comparing" with push buttons that make sounds.

- **Disney Fairies Tinker Bell and the Great Fairy Rescue Play-a-Sound Book. (Publications Int'l)** 18 mo & up \$13
Push buttons to make sounds that accompany the "enchanted adventure." Promotes gender stereotypes and early interest in media characters.

- **LeapFrog TAG Activity Storybook – Spiderman (LeapFrog)** 5 & up \$14
Provides online privileges to bring Spiderman to life and have him wreak havoc in Central Park. Leads to early online gaming and away from reading.

Baby Madness: Electronics aimed at infants and toddlers.

Electronic toys that teach babies to push buttons rather than actively interact and explore. These flashing lights and noises can over-stimulate infants.

- **Fun Shapes Jewelry Box (Vtech)** 12 mo & up \$18
A "talking" pink plastic box. Push buttons to hear the names of shapes and be told to put on lipstick & perfume. Promises to teach shapes and more, but really teaches baby girls to focus on appearance.



- **Vinci (Vinci)*** Birth & up \$389-479
Tablet computer for babies. Replaces interaction with people and the world with screens from birth. \$99 annual fee provides a continual supply of new apps as babies get older.

2011 TOADY Award



* These toys are nominations for the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood's 2011 TOADY (Toys Oppressive And Destructive to Young Children) AWARD. For more information see: www.commercialfreechildhood.org.

TRUCE thanks Matt Damon for his ongoing support.