



THE SOUND OF MUSIC. Children are fascinated by music boxes, especially when they are part of a sturdy "let's pretend" toy which they may call their own. When combining both appeals to sight and hearing, a toy can be an endless source of repetitive joy and imaginative experiences for children. Photo courtesy Playskool

## Choosing Toys for Preschool Child Calls for Know-How

If there is a preschooler in your heart and home this Christmas, playing a wise Santa Claus can be a real problem.

Besieged by television commercials of gimmick toys at costly prices, the youngster is likely to want everything he sees and change his mind many times over. If the parent is an indulgent Santa, broken toys the week after Christmas are likely to be a disappointment to the child as well as to the family pocketbook.

Even the most conscientious parent can make mistakes in selecting toys for pre-schoolers. The most common mistakes are these:

1. Selecting toys which appeal to adults, rather than to the child. Toys are fascinating to grown-ups too, but they often forget that the child's experience, strength, skills, and interests are a generation away.

2. Spending most of the family's annual toy budget at Christmas. Pre-schoolers outgrow toys faster than they outgrow their clothes. Toy buying should be spread out over the entire year and toys selected to meet the rapidly changing needs of the child.

Selecting toys that recreate the world-in-miniature. Charming as these toys may appear, if they are too detailed, they can confine the child's imagination or be too intricate for him to understand and play with freely.

4. Buying toys which are too similar in play values. A child should have a wardrobe of toys which meet a variety of needs and interests. He should have toys, for example, which appeal to the sense of hearing as well as to sight. Learning to

listen and appreciate sound and music are habits that should be encouraged early and can enrich a lifetime.

5. Underestimating the child's ability. To the preschooler, learning is fun. At an early age, he can enjoy and understand toys which enable him to absorb basic concepts of time, sequence, and mathematics, and graphic symbols which encourage reading readiness.

Good toys are just as important to the pre-school child as good nutrition. They are his tools of play, and it is through play that he learns, practices his new skills, experiments, develops his imagination, and works out his problems. In learning while playing and having fun, the pre-schooler develops, physically, emotionally, and creatively.

To guide parents of young children in the proper selection of researchers recommend these checkpoints:

1. Durability. To withstand a child's amazing ability to break toys, his playtools should be sturdy, soundly constructed, and made from durable materials. His toys are important to him and they should have enduring quality.

2. Safety. Paints should be non-toxic, and all edges, surfaces, and parts should be finished well. Avoid small parts so inviting to small mouths eager to "taste" everything. For many reasons, including safety, electrically operated toys are not suitable for the preschooler.

3. Construction and design. Toys should challenge, but not frustrate a child. The well-designed toy "works." Its construction should be simple enough for

a young child to understand, to take apart if he wishes, and to put back together again — by himself.

4. Make sure your child has some non-specific toys such as kindergarten blocks. With this classic construction toy, a child can give free rein to his imagination and the toy can "grow up" with the child.

5. Most important — select the proper toys for the stage of development of the individual child. Every child has his own pace in skills and interests. The age-grouping of toys by some manufacturers is helpful, but it is simply a broad guideline. Watch your child in play. Know his interests, the skills he enjoys exercising most, and the skills which should be challenged and developed. Select toys which can meet these immediate needs.

Once the proper toys have been chosen, give your child a creative environment in which to play. He needs an opportunity to play, to learn, and to discover at his own

pace. He should be able to make mistakes without criticism. His efforts should be appreciated and encouraged and adult guidance in play should be given only when it is sought. The wise parent simply points the way for the child to use his own imagination, intelligence, and skills.

A guidebook outlining further information for parents on the creative environment and proper toy selection is available from Playskool Research 437 Merchandise Mart, Chicago 60654, free on request. It is the result of Playskool's continuing work in this area with nursery school educators, child behavior experts, and the Gesell Institute for Child Child Development.

### IDEA FOR TODAY

We should speak to inspire others and not to confuse them. We each have to struggle day by day to do our best for ourselves and others. We can help each other to live a good life.

### GIVE TO CHARITY

In recent years many people — instead of giving a party during the holidays — have given to charity the money they would have spent for it, says the Automobile Club of Southern California. Have you thought of doing that this year?

### DONT DRINK AND DRIVE

If you're going to drive and have been drinking, stop for a moment and do some thinking — on how it will affect your reaction time, your vision, your alertness, suggests the Automobile Club of Southern California. Keep the holidays happy. Think about it.

### DON'T TAILGATE

The Automobile Club of Southern California reminds you that tailgating is dangerous business. This holiday season stay a safe distance behind the car in front of you. Multiply your speedometer reading by two and keep that many feet behind the car you are following.

### PEDESTRIAN

Don't assume that walk signals or crosswalks guarantee you safety as a pedestrian, advises the Automobile Club of Southern California. Especially during the holidays, motorists don't always look out for you. Be sure to look out for them.

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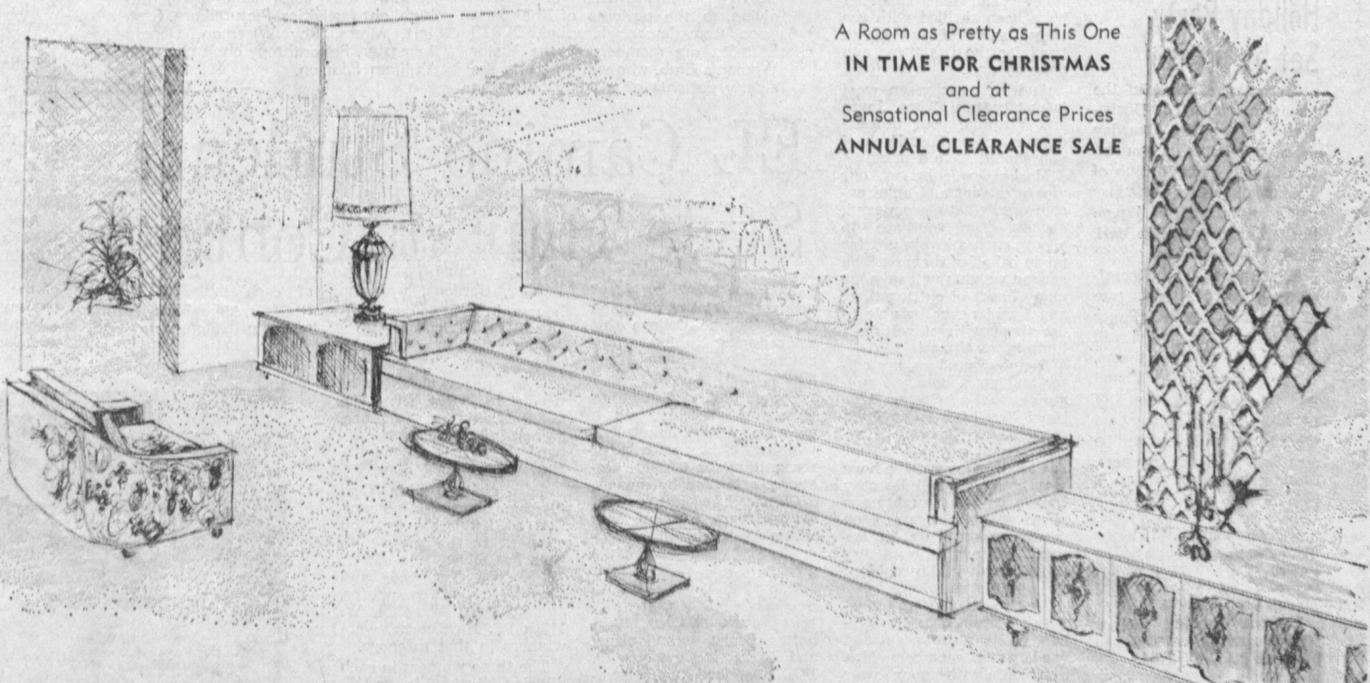


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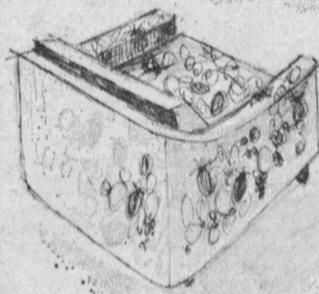
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