

Small Children's Toys

FATHER CHRISTMAS is very busy at the moment, sorting out his loads of toys for Christmas Day. Father and mother will doubtless visit toy departments for some of their presents. Now, please take it easy with those expensive toys. The children, of course, will ask for anything that catches their fancy. You are really spoiling them by buying elaborate toys through the pre-school and school years. Indulging them doesn't help them to appreciate, when older, that expensive things are bought with hard work. Further, in use, mechanical or elaborate toys need no initiative or imagination, which toys should encourage.

Children must have toys. Play is needed to develop their physical, mental and emotional powers. While playing a child is learning just what it can do with its body, with things, with other human beings, and the while is building habits of doing, thinking, and feeling that form the new person. Where a child plays, and what is played with, helps or holds back development, physically, mentally and emotionally. In the early stages play should be helping the development of the body and the senses. In the later stages play should not only aid muscle development, but, in addition, encourage mental growth and initiative through requiring dramatisation and constructive effort.

If you bear these principles in mind it is not hard to provide the right toys at the proper stages. From birth to three years of age simple things are wanted. Baby wants to feel, to reach out and savour things, so that up to six months rubber toys, cotton reels, coloured balls, and other small, light things that can't be swallowed, suffice. In the next half-year add bells, large pieces of paper to crumple, light blocks, covers of old saucepans and pegs or spoons to bang them with. A play pen keeps baby and toys together, and lets mother get on with her work. In this stage noise is delighted in, so a collection of any household things that can't cut or hurt or be swallowed can be used to ring the changes. You can buy drums if you wish, but tin or aluminium lids or pans are just as good. Something must be provided that lets baby put something or fit something into something else. There's quite a range of toys to be bought here, but bottles or tins and things to fill them with, can be found about the house. A range of stuffed animals provides a change. Don't tip all the toys into the play pen at once. Provide a few, take them away when interest dies, and substitute others.

When crawling, standing, walking and running develop, the toys must keep up with the developing body. There must be things to push or pull, to hang on, to catch. Balls, blocks, all sizes and shapes, home-made or bought, boxes to build with and climb on, something to swing on, a sand pit to play in, a small barrow or wagon of some kind. The family purse can be used, but most things needed can be made at home. A wooden train and other heavy duty toys are not beyond the ability of many fathers. For wet days coloured

picture books, paper, pencils, crayons can make up for the loss of out-of-doors.

From three to five years imaginative and creative play requires toys of many kinds so that the children can make believe in any way desired. Dolls and dolls' beds, materials for making things, house-keeping toys, tools like fathers, boxes, planks, a tyre slung from a tree, materials for playing shops, hospitals, or anything else—most of the things needed will already be in the home, and the toyshop will fill the gaps. At these ages playmates are needed, for the pre-schools need group play to help develop their social sense. Mechanical



This is the text of a talk on health broadcast recently from ZB, YA and YZ stations of the NZBS by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Deputy-Director-General of Health

toys that wind up are not good. The child sits back and looks on, interest flags soon, and it is really nicer to pull it to bits to see how it's made. If you want mechanical toys, the meccano type or others where simple constructive ability is called for are best.

The burden of this talk is that simple equipment can be turned by a child's imagination into satisfying play material. Much of it can be made or provided at home. A child does not need expensive toys, and by taking thought you can markedly reduce your Christmas toy expenditure.

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