
A Letter to Families About Toys and Games

Dear Families,

You will see a wide variety of toys and games in my family child care home. Some are purchased, and some are homemade. Almost anything that children can explore, put together, pull apart, push and pull, stack, string, or construct is a toy. Toys are designed for children's enjoyment. They are also wonderful tools for learning.

Babies like toys they can feel, look at, taste, smell, and shake. They learn that a rattle will make a noise only if it is moved and that a round block will only fit through a round hole, not a square one, if the hole is the same size as the block. Toddlers and twos like to push wagons, use busy boxes, pile blocks into containers and dump them out, build a tower, knock it down, and then build it again. The preschool children in my program handle puzzles, construct designs with blocks, sort and classify objects, and follow the rules for simple board games. They practice math skills as they match, make patterns, group, and compare objects. The school-age children enjoy using construction toys to create designs and structures, and they like to play board games.

As children play, I talk with them to teach new words, engage them in conversation, and challenge them to test new ideas. I might say:

“I see you used all the triangles and diamonds to make your design.”

“You put the buttons in different piles. How did you decide where to put each button?”

Here are some ideas that can help your child get the most from playing with toys and games at home:

Common household objects make wonderful toys. Some of the best toys are not commercial products; they are simply common household objects. An empty box; large empty thread spools; pots and pans; plastic food containers; kitchen utensils; and collections of buttons, bottle caps, keys, seeds, shells, and rocks are just a few of the things that children use as toys.

A few good toys are better than too many. Too many toys can overwhelm a young child. It's far better to have a few good toys that can be used in a variety of ways. Look for toys that encourage children to be active and that are sturdy and safe.

Keep in mind that you are your child's favorite toy. No toy can replace the joy your child experiences by having you as a playmate! Your interest and involvement make playing with toys even more fun and engaging.

Sincerely,

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