

The Educational Toys Guide

**ALL AGES
COVERED**

**From Babies
To Teenagers!**



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Introduction

Educational toys are not limited to any certain age, gender or level of intelligence. Children will always be at play and what better ways to take advantage of that time than to provide kids with toys that are not only fun, but that teach them something too?

It should also go without saying, but educational toys and game should never take the place of one-on-one learning with parents, siblings and other adults.

To help your child learn or improve their new skills, the following information has suggested educational toys by age group.



Babies: 0-24 Months

Infant toys mainly focus on improving sight, sound and touch. Babies cannot see or grasp things very well to start out, but their sight and strength do improve as they get older so any educational toy should cater to that need.

Here are a few examples of educational toys for babies 24 months and under:



Rattles:

Traditional rattles let babies practice grasping and even small infants can hear the sound the toy produces. As the child grows, they will learn that moving the rattle creates the noise and, while it may not be the best skill to learn, babies also learn to hit objects with the rattle. Higher tech versions can be found from V-Tech and Baby Einstein, while Fisher Price still produces good rattles without the need for additional lights, music and batteries.

Transition Toys:

Transition toys, or sit to stand toys, are those that can be used for almost any aged infant as they grow. Most start out as stationary toys with lights and music, later on children can use them as walkers or push them around once they have learned to walk, and lastly they can either be ridden on once the baby becomes a toddler or babies can take advantage of more skilled activities on the toy's surface.

A few examples are the V-Tech Sit to Stand Walker, the Fisher Price Bright Beginnings Activity Walker and the Bright Starts Having a Ball Get Rolling Activity Table.

Toddlers Aged 3 to 5

Three to five year olds should be able to follow simple commands, show an interest in pretend play and also entertain themselves for short periods of time. They should also be able to grasp a pen and start to draw shapes or people and start to try and copy other pictures or letters someone else has written for them.

Sorting and Matching Games:

By this age toddlers can recognize the difference between two or more objects. Toys that involve sorting (like putting block shapes into their correctly size hole) or matching (cards or objects), keep kids interested as they grow. Mini supermarkets and kitchen play sets teach kids to put items where they go and also associate those objects with their pictures (fruits, vegetables, trash, etc.).

Melissa & Doug make great sorting and stacking toys, as well as Fisher Price and Little Tikes if looking for larger and more elaborate products.



Paints and Coloring Books:

While art supplies may be a little messy at times, they are great for teaching toddlers dexterity in preparation for learning to write. Crayola makes a line of paints and markers called 'Color Wonder' that can only be seen when used on special paper, which prevents children from coloring on unwanted surfaces.

Using markers help children to control their hands while coloring within the lines, while paints teach children about mixing colors, textures and piques their creative side. Modeling clay is also another alternative but does require adult supervision to make sure younger toddlers do not eat the clay or stick it to a surface where it should not be applied.

Kids Aged 5 to 7

At this age, children like to make friends or interact with the friends they already have. They can follow directions and understand rules, they understand the concept of winning or losing and also taking turns. Five to seven year olds are more independent and may want to play without the interference of mom and dad.

Costumes:

Kids love to play make believe; even a simple stick can become a magic wand or a spoon to eat invisible soup. Both boys and girls can benefit from costumes or a dress up box. It encourages them to use their imagination and makes them come up with ingenious ways to transform what they have in the box, into the tools, toys and clothes they need in their pretend world.

Used costumes can be found at second hand stores or when looking for specific characters, the company website may be the best (such as Disney Characters).

Construction Toys/ Building Sets:

Construction toys are not just for little boys. Little girls can also enjoy creating brick worlds with LEGO Friends and other 'girly' sets from Duplo. Old-fashioned Lincoln Logs are great for building houses to put dolls inside or creating a wooden garage for Hot Wheels to park. Tinker Toys and Magnetics are also good alternatives.



All of the aforementioned toys help with motor skills, promote imaginative play and last for years. Building toys are great for any child as they continue to grow.

Kids Aged 8 to 11

Older children enjoy playing in groups by this age, but still may become angry when they do not win or get their way, even though they understand that in every game there is a winner and a loser! They start to copy things they see on TV or activities that their other friends enjoy, so the following activities may help children to learn new skills while still being in a group setting.

Board Games:

A seven year old should be able to read and follow basic game instructions as well as explain the game to other players. Board games are a fun way for children to learn the above-mentioned skills, following directions, problem solving, public speaking and even leadership roles while teaching others to play.

Hasbro's 'Sorry!' and 'Candyland' are great starter games, while 'Battleship' and 'Clue' are a little more advanced.

Musical Instruments:

By this age, most kids have shown some kind of interest in a musical instrument or two. Brand new, professional grade instruments might not be the idea until kids truly know whether or not they want to stick with the instrument, but used instruments can be found at pawnshops or online.

Learning to read music and play an instrument is a great way to pass the time, improve dexterity and learn something new. With the help of videos from YouTube and online support, many children can be self-taught nowadays.



Any type of woodwind instrument should be sanitized and have the reeds replaced before playing them for the first time. The keyboard is generally the easiest instrument to start learning, but if the child prefers a woodwind instrument, they can always start with a recorder (plastic flute).

Pre-Teens (12+)

By this time, kids are old enough to take care of higher end toys, they have the ability to read directions and probably prefer to do things on their own. Sometimes at this age, it is hard for children to focus on quiet activities, so these suggestions may help kids to stay focused while learning a new skill.

Science Sets:

Live science sets cover just about any living thing a child could imagine. There are kits with plants or mini greenhouses, animals such as frogs, hermit crabs or triops and insects such as ladybugs, butterflies or the well-known ant farm. The packaging needs to be read thoroughly before purchase since some of the living things are sent separately through the mail after the kits are purchased and some states do not allow it or can not be shipped to (such as Alaska). For kids that are a little less apt to care for live creatures, a chemistry set is a good alternative.



Life Skills and Crafts:

Educational toys do not have to be boring, most are quite fun and help children to learn skills that they can use later on in life. Sewing kits, simple wood working project, knot tying kits and even candy or food making machines can provide skills that will come in handy as kids grow up. The companies American Girl, Creativity for Kids and ALEX are all great options.

Teenagers

Teenagers rarely play with old-fashioned toys, but there are still a few educational options out there.

Language games, programs and apps are available for any type of electronic platform. For any teen that is glued to their phone or computer, trivia games or math puzzles are also another option but any game or toy that does not involve an electronic device is best.

Model building kits are another, more classic 'toy', but still interesting enough to hold the attention of a teenage mind. Cars are probably the most well known, but there are also miniatures, war reenactments, anatomy models and even mythical creatures like vampires and goblins. Warhammer miniatures also go along with a role playing game, Revell car models that are built to scale and dollhouse kits are all great ideas and each one is very unique.

Advanced science kits are great for teenagers. Dissection kits can be ordered online and come with a wide range of animals to examine, everything from frogs, rats, cats, baby pigs and brains. The Carolina Biological Supply Company and Pearson's Anatomy offer great kits and supplies.

Educational Toys For Parents and Children To Enjoy Together

Kids are not the only ones who can benefit from educational toys. Parents can enjoy time with their children and maybe learn a little bit too while having fun with these suggested educational toys:

Robot Building Sets:

There are many different types of robotic building sets available,



some use solar power, like sets from OWI; or, the battery powered 4M Tin Can Robot that parents and children create using old tin soda cans.

Physics Workshops:

Thames and Kosmos offers up numerous physics workshops for kids and adults to explore. There are remote controlled vehicles, gear workshops, crystal growing sets, chemistry sets and more. Each kit (depending on the model) can preform at least 15 different types of experiments and even though most are for ages 10 and up, adult assistance is always helpful.

Edible Experiments:

Some edible experiments come in kits with all of the needed ingredients included and other experiments just come in an illustrated book and parents must provide the ingredients. Both options are a great way to learn about science, cooking and following instruction. The best part is that all of the experimental results can be eaten. Poof Slinky books and kits are a good option and so is the Clementoni Kitchen Laboratory.

Don't Forget Books!

Not all toys need to have batteries or need to be connected to an electrical outlet in order to be fun and educational, and not all educational toys have to be boring. One of the most educational 'toys' for kids is a simple book.

Babies can start out with board books, younger kids with picture books and older children with chapter books. They can read to themselves, read to their siblings or be read to by an adult. Even audio books can be played at night in order to help kids fall asleep, or during long car trips to make the time pass that much faster.

If the only way to get a child to read a book is on an electronic device, eBooks can be downloaded on almost any smartphone, computer or tablet with just a few mouse clicks and many of them are free. Some books even offer



the 'read to me' function that helps children read along or for older children, narrated versions of books are usually offered for a small additional fee.

Getting kids to use their imagination at a young age and encouraging them to use their problem solving skills throughout life can all be started simply by playing with a few of the suggested educational toys by age group.

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