

## WHAT TOYS MEAN TO YOUR CHILD

Toys have meaning between parent and child as a part of their total relationship. It is important, particularly as children grow older, for parents to observe their children and see them as individuals with personalities and interests distinct from those of their parents.

“Parents must have reasonable expectations of their children,” says Dr. Mark A. Stewart, Director of Psychiatry at children’s Hospital in St. Louis. “It is unreasonable to buy a little boy a fancy electrical toy that has to be carefully handled. It is characteristic of very curious, restless little boys to take apart these fancy toys- -and the toys usually don’t get put together again,”

Dr. Stewart, Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at Washington University Medical School says, “I would encourage parents to get their children simple toys that encourage the youngsters to use their imagination.”

Virtually all educators, pediatricians and child psychologists who have expressed themselves on the subject of toys agree with Dr. Stewart that the simplest toys are the best ones.

Incorporating the recommendations of many childcare experts, it is suggested that parents ask themselves these questions when choosing toy:

- ◆ Is it well-made, of durable materials? A toy that breaks easily is a great disappointment to a child.
- ◆ Is it safe, free of toxic or flammable materials, and with no sharp edges?
- ◆ Can it be easily manipulated and enjoyed by the child right now? A toy that a child has to “grow up to” gives him no happiness; only a sense of his own inadequacy.
- ◆ Does it lend itself to different kinds of play, and will it maintain its usefulness for several years? Blocks, balls, and dress-up clothes are examples of toys that continue to be used in different ways as children grow.
- ◆ Is it unstructured enough to provide scope for a children’s imagination? A child should use his toys as tools of play, but a toy that is too detailed or too realistic will, instead, dictate its use to the child.
- ◆ Does it offer variety of problem-solving situations, allowing the child to make decisions and develop independence of thought?