

Best Toys and Gifts: a speech therapist's list!

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What to get for baby? For the 1-year old? For the 2-year old? There are SO many options. It's hard to know what's going to be interesting to a young child for more than five minutes, what will be "educational", what won't fall apart, what will get that "wow" factor when your little one opens it up. Honestly, they may be more excited about the large box (which is also a great gift) or the wrapping paper anyway. In that case, it may be a good time to think about NON toy gifts.



Think experiences! Memberships to local child-friendly places like a zoo or children's museum and gift cards for activities like swim lessons, play cafes, music and gym classes would all be great options. Tickets to toddler-friendly shows and concerts would be great experience gifts as well.

However, I also realize that a baby or toddler may not get too excited about opening a gift card. So, toys are inevitably on the gift list!

From a true communication perspective I have to say that toys don't really matter. It's the interaction that happens WITH the toy (or activity) that allows the true magic of communication. That said, gifts are often important for families to give and suggesting that loving grandparents get their grandchildren nothing or simply contribute to a college fund may not be their idea of a gift.

This age range can be tricky as it is easy to be overwhelmed in the toy aisle with so many "educational" toys with lights and music and sounds and second languages and buttons and spinning parts, etc. etc. Of course toys that light up, play music, and have lots of buttons to push can be entertaining but there's minimal opportunity to interact with others when using electronic toys.

When shopping for the little ones, the best toys:

- do not require batteries
- encourage building or construction
- encourage active play
- allow for pretend play

For those who like acronyms, think "CAP"! Toys should allow kids to CREATE, be ACTIVE, and PRETEND.

If you keep "CAP" in mind when shopping, you'll find lots of good choices. Also, remember to *think about what your child can do with the toy rather than what the toy can do.*

Small sample of "best" toys: bubbles, puzzles, books, pop up tents, toy cars, puppets, costumes, balls

*For the FULL article and more complete toy list, go to www.letsplaythespeechandlanguage.com.

