

Gift Ideas From a Parent Educator

Here is a list of gift ideas for young children that we love and why we love them.

Infants and Babies

- Black and white books, cards and toys help with vision development and are high interest objects for tracking.



- Toys with shatterproof mirrors- babies are highly motivated by looking at faces and studying faces can help with social-emotional development.



- Toys that roll- for those about to crawl toys that roll can be great- some kids love the motorized ones and others are afraid of them so consider that before you purchase.



- Object Permeance toys- toys that teaches children the concept that just because you can't see something it still exist- this skill typically develops around 8 months.



- Toys that you put objects in and take objects out develops fine motor skills and hand eye coordination.



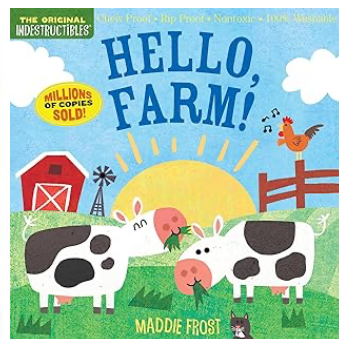
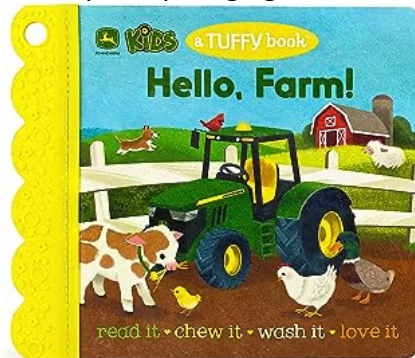
- Suction cup toys: promote problem solving and work on fine motor skills- and they are great when you need some entertainment while in a highchair.



- Tummy time mats: Promotes tummy time while providing a sensory experience.



- Washable baby books: We all know babies explore things with their mouth so allowing them to have books that will hold up to their curiosity is a great help at still promoting literacy at a young age:



- Bath Toys: I feel like I need to replace my bath toys so frequently! For babies having simple toys that float will encourage them to reach for the object so they can work on

hand-eye coordination. They also have light up and scented bath toys that can provide a fun sensory experience for you child.



- Bubbles: Bubbles are good for so many ages. With babies they promote hand-eye coordination as the child reaches for the bubbles. Kids are usually very motivated by bubbles so you can use them to promote a host of other things like trying new sounds, encouraging new movements, and helping them calm down after extreme emotions.



- Push toys: Babies who are learning to walk love push toys. Consider the type of flooring that it will be used on when selecting one- if you have Floors that are carpeted you may want a push toy with little resistance built in (ie 4 wheels on the bottom) floors with low resistance/friction (hard wood, tile etc) you may want to consider a push toy that is weighted or has some drag to it.



- Toys that mimic what their adults use- hear me out- babies have way more interest in real remotes/keys than the ones that are advertised for them. They are trying to mimic the adults in their life which is how we all learn about social norms so get them keys/remotes etc that look like the real thing- as long as they are safe and don't have any choking hazards or electronic pieces, encourage them to explore these devises:



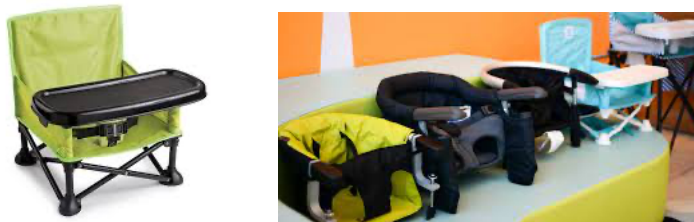
- Stacking/Nesting toys- at this age we are looking for simple stacking and nesting to encourage hand-eye coordination. Learning how to nest/stack circular objects comes first before kids learn how to nest objects with corners that they will have to manipulate in different directions. Kids will be more interested at knocking stacked toys down before they learn to build them up. They are exploring cause and effect when they do this.



- Toys that promote climbing safely. We want kids to learn how to climb and develop gross motor skills... but in a safe way. Look for climbing toys that are low to the ground and have rounded edges.



- Travel highchairs can be a great asset when going out with your baby. You can get one that straps onto a chair for when you go out to eat, use it at parks, attending ballgames or other places that you may need to have a good, clean space to put your baby down. Your child will need pretty good head and trunk control before using these.



- Pop up toys and simple musical instruments: promote anticipation and learning about cause and effect and promote that fine motor, hand-eye coordination that babies are working on.



Toddlers

- Riding toys develop gross motor and balance. Make sure you choose one that is an appropriate size for your child



- Toys that use tools or implements (like tweezers or stylus) Help strengthen hand muscles for pre-writing (fine motor) skills



- Smaller sized climbing toys are great for gross motor, balance and help keep kids fit.



- Swinging is another gross motor activity that promotes vestibular input.



- Sorting Activities: Toddlers are learning about shapes and colors



- Play Sets can promote communication skills as toddlers are mimicking what they see and do in real life with the toys.



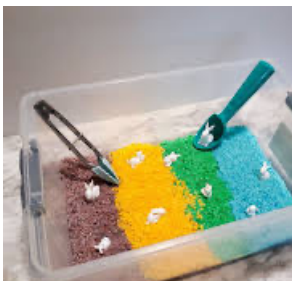
- Ramps and things that roll encourage hand-eye coordinator and you can use these to promote concepts like counting to three, stop and go and fast and slow.



- Scooping and pouring as a great skill for toddlers to work on that develops fine motor skills and wrist rotation and control. Adding toys to the bath tub or a sensor bin so that your child can work on this skill is a lot of fun.



- Sensory play is great for toddlers- it promotes fine motor skills, can help regulate emotions and provides them with an opportunity to explore different textures. You can get a stand-alone sensory bin, use a rubber made tub or convert a water table into a sensory table.



- Sensory Bin fillers are also popular among toddlers. Here are a list of edible and non edible ideas to fill a sensory bin with in order of least to most messy:

Edible:

- Crushed gram crackers
- Dry oatmeal
- Cereal

- Cloud Dough (Flour and oil in a ration of 8:1- not delicious but safe if someone puts it in their mouth)
- Cooked noodles
- Jell-O
- Pudding
- Oobleck (Cornstarch and water ratio of 1.5:1... again not delicious but safe if put in the mouth)

Nonedible:

- Paper, ribbon and tape
 - Leaves, pinecones acorns
 - Dried corn
 - Kinetic Sand
 - Dried beans or rice
 - Pom poms/cotton balls
 - Shaving cream
 - Slime
- Building Toys: Toddlers are learning to construct things, building materials that do not interlock are easier for toddlers to manipulate and teaches them about problem solving and cause and effect.



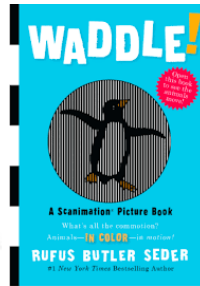
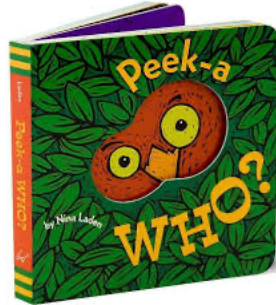
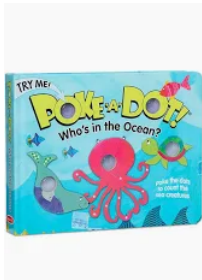
- Toys that allow toddlers to mimic real life (going to the doctor, taking care of a baby, cooking, etc.) are great for a child's social-emotional development.



- Toddlers love playing with balls- practicing rolling balls back and forth, down ramps, shooting baskets and kicking are all great skills to work on.



- Reading with toddlers should be interactive- look for books where the child can participate in the story like lifting a flap, finding an item in the picture or pop a bubble.



Preschoolers

- Building – Magnetic tiles and marble runs are great for preschoolers and are toys that the kids will use for years to come. They can be taken apart and reconfigured easily and quickly which encourages problem solving and fine motor development. Additionally, there are several 'add on' sets that you can purchase down the line to extend the playtime of these toys.



- Scissors, glue – cutting and gluing are skills that kids need to work on before preschool so practicing them in a fun way at home is great for fine motor skills- and you child's Kindergarten teacher will thank you!

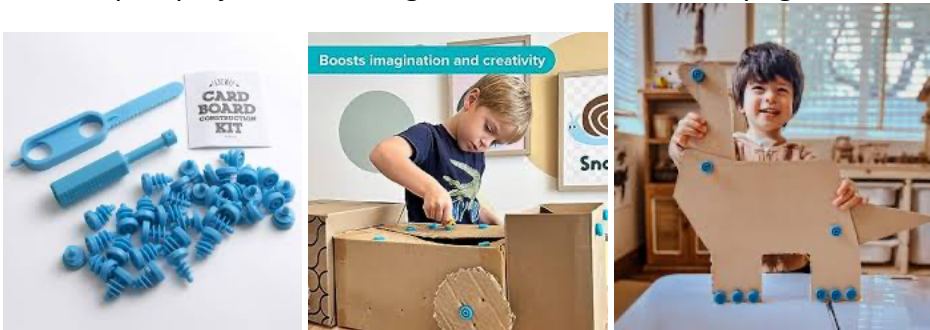


- Painter's Tape is the most requested stocking stuffer in my house- each kid gets their own roll and they can make crafts, a maze or a balance beam on the floor. This great gift

encourages kids to use their imagination and promotes fine motor skills while the child pulls and tears the tape.



- Cardboard construction kits let your kids use all of the old boxes that you have laying around the house. The tools are kid safe and they can learn about constructing simple and complex projects. This is a gift that can work for many ages of kids.



- Riding toys- preschoolers are learning how to to balance and pedal and riding toys are a great way to encourage that.



- Children's frontal lobes develop rapidly between 2.5 and 5 years old- which means that emotions can run high. Helping them identify feelings and learning tools they can use to calm down are important at this age.



- Balancing toys- learning how to balance enhances children's core and gross motor development as well as teaching children about special awareness.



- Simple games- preschoolers are ready to learn games with a few simple rules. They are also ready to learn how to take turns, win and loose and games can be a great way to facilitate that learning.



- Pretend play- Dressing up and play sets can spark a preschoolers imagination. Pretend play is often how children learn how to do things



- Number and letter recognition are great to practice before Kindergarten – Kids will learn to identify the shape and match the number or letter to itself, recognize its name and finally be able to assign a quantity or sound to the number or letter. A lot of practice is needed to master this skill.



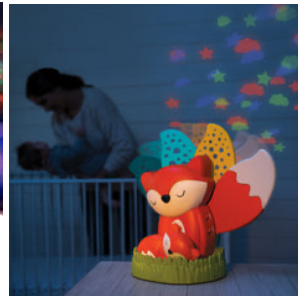
- Sensory toys- kinetic sand and playdough are great for sensory input for this age They also encourage fine motor development in a playful way- you can practice colors, making letters, cutting or just rolling and smashing.



- Bath toys- Bath color drops, finger paints and bubble bath are great for preschoolers and let kids have a fun sensory experience with minimal clean up!



- Unique night lights can be a fun gift and help kids calm down and relax before bedtime- or they can be used to spark imagination.



- Swinging, jumping and spinning can help kids regulate, learn about where they are in space and develop gross motor skills.

