

SAVVY SHOPPING

The UK is now officially battling a recession and we are all feeling the pinch and trying to find ways to economise. When money is tight it is understandably tempting to buy toys from cheaper channels but picking up a deal from a classified ad, a car Boot sale or a market store may not be the bargain you first expected.

Used Toys

Consider the following before purchasing a second hand toy from a car boot sale, jumble sale, classified advert or the internet.

- *Toy safety legislation is constantly being updated to reflect newly identified hazards and risks. It follows therefore that older toys may not comply with the most up to date safety standards and you could potentially be putting your child at risk.*
- *Packaging and instructions are often missing from used toys. At first this may be considered a minor inconvenience, however, toy safety rules require that the packaging and instructions include details such as the appropriate age for the toy and warnings and instructions to ensure their safe use. It is not appropriate to sell toys without these crucial details.*
- *Buying used toys in this way limits your consumer rights as you don't have the protection of the Sale of Goods Act (these provisions only cover sales that happen in the course of a business.) If a second hand toy is faulty on receipt or develops a fault in use, it is unlikely that you will be able to arrange a refund or replacement*
- *Toys are recalled every year for safety reasons. Some recalled toys are not returned to the manufacturer and it is possible that some may find their way onto the second-hand market.*
- *Toy Safety legislation is designed to ensure that toys hold up to the rigours of a child's normal behaviour. Toys are not, however, indestructible! You cannot know the sort of treatment a second hand toy has undergone in the hands of a particularly inquisitive or rough child! There may also be hygiene issues with some toys, particularly those for children who still put toys in their mouths.*

Counterfeit Toys

There is a thriving market in counterfeit toys and such toys are likely to be inferior and may be unsafe. Reputable retailers are unlikely to be selling fake toys. Fake toys are more likely to be found on the internet or through less reputable retailers and some market stalls. If a toy does not look quite right or the price is significantly lower than you would normally expect to pay, ask yourself if your toy is genuine before buying.

Reputation

Reputable companies value their good name and reputation and will take steps to ensure the toys that they sell are safe and of good quality. Toys which carry the Lion Mark are made by members of the British Toy and Hobby Association and such members have to comply with minimum standards and are kept up to date with toy safety developments.

Legal standards for toys cover safety requirements, not necessarily quality requirements. Companies with a reputation to protect are likely to have higher quality standards than those required by law. In short, their toys are more likely to withstand the rigours of child ownership for longer. Buying cheaper toys may be false economy in the longer term.

During a recession it is possible that some less reputable manufacturers may be tempted to cut corners to save costs. During these hard economic times you need to be able to trust the brand and the company to ensure that they are unlikely to risk their good name.

Reputable brands will have an after sales service where you will be able to get help if things do go wrong. Look on the packaging to see if there is a website or telephone number provided. These after sales services can offer general advice on their toys including provision of replacement parts for broken or lost components.

Reviews of toy recalls made so far this year for safety reasons in Europe tells us that most are unbranded and are sold by so called "rouge traders".

In conclusion, toys are one of the most safety regulated consumer products on the market; buying cheap toys from unknown sources may be putting your children at risk. If something seems too good to be true, it usually is!