

# Toy Safety

Choosing and using toys wisely is an essential part of helping your child get the most out of toys and play. This booklet has been prepared by the National Toy Council to help you in the selection of safe toys. It gives guidelines on ensuring that all play is safe play. The guidelines in this booklet are all based on comprehensive research.



Making sure that the toys you buy conform to safety standards and will not present a risk to your child is not difficult. Most toys on the British market today are carefully made and safe to play with. There are a number of organisations working to make sure safety standards are maintained, from the European Commission and British government to trading standards officers, safety experts and the manufacturers themselves.

## CHOOSING SAFE TOYS

Always go to a reputable shop, ideally one that is a member of the Toy Retailers Association (TRA). You are more likely to get useful help and advice if you go to a specialist toy shop, the toy department of large store or the toy selection of a major chain. Mail order catalogues also provide a useful reference.

Check out the packaging. There are three things you should look for:

**THE LION MARK** This is a symbol of safety and quality, backed by a Code of Practice, developed by the British Toy & Hobby Association (BTHA) and used only by members of this association. Toys bearing the Lion Mark have been made to the highest standards currently in force in Britain and the European Community (BS 5665/BS EN 71). The symbol is also used by "approved Lion Mark Retailer" shops to indicate that all toys sold in that shop confirm to the Lion Mark standard.

There has been much confusing talk of the CE mark in the media. The CE mark is not a consumer mark. It is a mark of conformity aimed at assisting the free movement of goods within the European Community. Toys carrying the CE mark are obliged to carry the manufacturer's name and address. The consumer, when looking for a mark of safety and quality, should always turn to the Lion Mark.

**SMALL PARTS** Little children can easily choke on small objects. The under threes are especially at risk because they put everything into their mouths to explore the shape and texture. It is impossible to watch a child all the time. Even if you think your child has understood your warnings, a small toy can prove tempting. A safety message such as "not suitable for children under 36 months because of small parts", therefore **must be taken literally**.

You will see this picture on an increasing number of toys and toy boxes. It is part of the label on toys which are safe and suitable for children of

3 years and older, but which are unsafe for younger children. This picture means: **Warning - do not give the toy to children less than three years, nor allow them to play with it.**



**AGE ADVICE** Messages such as "recommended for children aged 3-4" or "play age 5-7" are **discretionary guidelines**. Age guidelines can help you decide if the toy will be fun for your child to play with and if it will prove stimulating. Remember what she or he enjoys at the moment, for example if a 10-piece jigsaw is easy to complete, try one with 20 or 25 pieces.

**CHECK THE TOY** Ask to see the toy out of the box and check that it's sturdy and well made. It's especially important to look over toys for babies and toddlers to make sure there are no small pieces that come loose or seams that come apart. Don't forget, also, that if a toy is not strong enough to withstand play it will be a disappointment to an older child. Remember the packaging is not normally part of the toy and should be disposed of safely before the toy is given to your child.

**CHOOSE THE RIGHT TOY FOR THE RIGHT CHILD** Often a toy is well designed and safe but causes problems when it gets into the wrong hands. A building brick that is safe, interesting and educational for an older child can be lethal if a toddler chokes on it. Likewise, a toddler who can only just sit up won't cope with a trundle truck and will just keep falling off. Think about your children and what they can manage before you buy a toy. The table on the back gives guidelines on which toys may prove dangerous for certain age groups and suggests safe alternatives.



This table should only act as a guideline and the most important element to stress is the proper supervision of children.

APPROXIMATE AGE	TOYS TO AVOID	CHOOSE INSTEAD
0-1 year	<p>sit-in babywalkers trundle trucks motorised toys</p> <p>hairy and furry toys</p>	<p>push along toys</p> <p>toys with smooth fabric covers or solid plastic toys</p>
1-3 years	<p>little toys or little pieces, including thin, breakable crayons or pencils</p> <p>toys you can bite such as foam balls</p>	<p>large toys and drawing materials that can't be swallowed or stuffed in ears or up noses</p> <p>tough toys that you can chew</p>
3-6	deflated balloons	balloons that are already blown up (as long as you are watching) or balls
6-8 years	chemistry sets or other kits with chemicals	science kits with no chemicals such as magnets or prisms
8-10 years	<p>film developing kits</p> <p>fuel powered model engines</p>	<p>camera and film</p> <p>electric models or train sets</p>

By the age of ten, most children know how to handle their toys and accidents are caused by their own exuberance or carelessness. They should be encouraged to take care, particularly when younger brothers and sisters are about.

## KEEPING TOYS SAFE

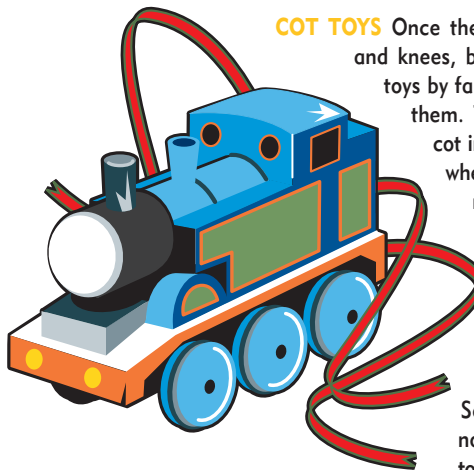


**TIDY UP!** All the family can get hurt if they fall over toys on the floor, or, even worse, the stairs. It's impossible to be absolutely tidy with children about, but try to teach them to clear up after playing. If appropriate, keep one room or area for most play activities. A toy box, an old laundry basket, a large supermarket trolley bag or a cardboard box can help you to create a safe home environment.

**CHECK THE TOYS** Go through your toy box regularly and clear out any broken and damaged toys. Throw them away (even if you have to wait until the children are asleep). Don't hand them on to jumble sales or charity shops, you may just be handing on an accident to someone else's child.

**DON'T GET IN A BIG MIX UP** Keep toys meant for older children apart from toys meant for younger ones. We have already explained that it can be dangerous to buy a toy that is inappropriate for your child's age and ability. Their big brother or sister's toy can be just as unsuitable. Help older children to find places they can make models or do chemistry experiments without little ones getting in their way.

## SPECIAL TIPS FOR SPECIAL TOYS



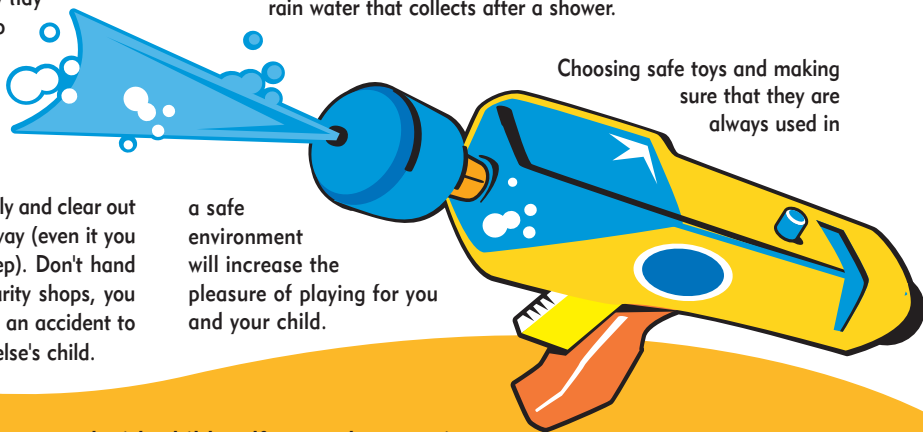
**COT TOYS** Once they can get on their hands and knees, babies can strangle on cot toys by falling with their neck across them. Take string toys out of the cot in plenty of time for safety - when your baby is about five months old. Take out activity centres as soon as your baby can pull to stand to remove the risk of your baby climbing out.

### NOISY TOYS AND CAP GUNS

Some toys can make loud noises. Bangs or single loud tones can sometimes damage hearing. Never allow children to hold noisy toys close to their ears or to fire cap guns next to someone's head.

**BATTERY TOYS** When you change batteries, change them all at once. New batteries can make old batteries get dangerously hot if they are mixed in together. If toys are not played with for longer than a week, take out the batteries to avoid damage from corrosion. Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations and instructions.

**GARDEN TOYS** Fix garden toys over grass or soil, not on concrete patios. Make sure there's plenty of room to walk round swings, as being hit by a swing seat can cause serious injury. Empty paddling pools after use and store them deflated or upside down; children can easily drown even in the rain water that collects after a shower.



Choosing safe toys and making sure that they are always used in

a safe environment will increase the pleasure of playing for you and your child.

*The National Toy Council is concerned with child welfare and promoting a sensible attitude towards toys and play. Its members include representatives of the Child Accident Prevention Trust, British Toy & Hobby Association, National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries, The Trading Standards Institute, BBC Children's Television, Kidscape, national press, academics, retailers and toy safety experts.*

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

BTHA, 80 Camberwell Road, London SE5 0EG

Child Accident Prevention Trust, 4th Floor, Cloister Court,  
22-26 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AJ

See all of the National Toy Council's leaflets on the internet at [www.btha.co.uk](http://www.btha.co.uk)

