

KID'S TOYS BY AGE

The main factors for the child's development are learning, maturing and activity. Every single learning or activity requires a certain degree of maturity. Proper activity of child is necessary, but in a right time at certain maturity level. If this period is overlooked it can lead to the weakened ability to perform various tasks. Teaching a child some skill too soon does not contribute to his development and on the other hand can have unwanted consequences: child can lose interest, motivation and self-confidence. The main activity of a child is playing. During the game, child develops his own features and abilities. A child gains valuable experience while playing, but the game has to be adapted to the child's age, because the child will respond only to the activities that are interesting to him and which suits to his evolving possibilities. If some toy does not suit the evolving capacities of a child, it can not stimulate his physical or mental development.

While growing up children are going through various development phases and the toys are their important tools to cope with the challenges of growing up. During development, child needs different kinds of toys and they have to be appropriate and adapted to the age and child development stage. If we offer a child some toy that is too simple for it, he will get bored and lose interest very quickly. If we give him a toy designed for older children, he will not understand it, or it will be too demanding for him and affect his self-confidence.

As the child develops parents have the obligation to change his toys, so they can fulfill his current development needs, because the proper selection of toys has influence on the development of each segment of his being: the senses, motor skills, intellect, socialization...

Children explore and learn about the life through play, and parents should actively participate in the play. We should play with children, show them how to play with certain toys, what they can do and what should not do with it. You should talk to a child and teach him language and communication skills. Reading on a daily basis to a child enables him to speak correctly in the early age, and later on it evokes his imagination and reveals the world around him.

After the birth, baby is discovering the physical world as well as her own body. She is not yet capable to control her movements or muscles and often reacts reflexively. At first, baby reacts only to a bright and vivid colours and still needs to get familiar with various sounds, smells and her surrounding. The very first baby toy are her own fingers, and she begins to play with them in the second month of life. By the third month she will start to connect rattle with its sound and start to grab things that are given to her and hold it for a moment or two.

The very first baby toy is her own body, more specific her fingers. Later on she will start to grab and explore things around her - like blanket, towel, baby hat ties, etc.

Child under three months of age should have toys with vivid colours, which will stimulate the development of her fine motorics. These toys should be soft, made out of linen or terry cloth, have bright colours, shape and size has to be right for the baby to hold it in hand. Baby reacts positively to the sounds, so the music devices with calm tones or lullabies are suitable for the baby.

Baby between 3 and 6 months of age loves to observe things. Above her at a distance of 25 cm you should hang various beads and ribbons, which will move and jingle when touched. The child in this period can also hold rattle in hand and observe it. These toy can be named as “the observing toys” and they have influence on the eye movement coordination and eye muscles development. In this period the baby will start to control hand movements and she will develop capability to hold objects with both hands. She will put everything in her mouth, so it is very important that the toys are safe and clean. Toys should not have small parts which baby can break off and then swallow, and they have to be made out of the child-safe materials.

At first, the baby should be given a rattle (cca 5cm diameter) with bold and contrasting colours - for example red and yellow or black and white. The rattle will contribute to the development of vision and hearing, coordination of movement, concentration and attention. Later on, the baby will require more complex rattles, because she will start to connect movement of the hands when she holds a rattle with a distinctive sound. In this period baby should be stimulated to get acquainted with its surrounding. In this period the mobile toy should be hanged above the baby’s crib. The dangling objects of this toy should also have bright colours. It should be placed in the central point above the crib. The bright colours will attract baby’s attention and expand her visual attention, and its central position will allow the baby to see it from a natural position. The mobile toy should not move monotonously, because this can affect baby’s vision. Safe toys for this age are the soft cotton dolls, toys that baby can bite, wooden toys with simple shapes and similar toys. All toys given to the children in this period have to be well designed and safe, so the parts of toy could not fall off while the child plays, or when she hits the toy on something.

Between 6 and 9 months of age baby becomes more agile and starts to stretch. At this stage, various things out of rubber or wood and also cubes that can be thrown on the floor are attractive for the child. Each sound that some thing makes when it fall encourages her to a new activity. She begins to discover new objects, sounds and living area around her. At that time the game should include a rag ball attached to a string that a child can catch. Child still can not throw and catch the ball, but it will follow its movement and this will motivate

him to begin to play with it. This helps a development of motor skills, movement coordination and getting familiar with a surrounding. Playing with the ball helps baby to strengthen eye muscles, because while baby follows the balls path, the eye muscles coordination is developing. Kicking the ball strengthens baby's leg muscles, preparing it for walking, running, jumping, climbing... . The toys with wheels that the child can pull with rope (like cars, trains, etc.) contribute to the development of child's motor and intellectual abilities.

From 9 to 12 months of age a child loves to play with objects that have holes in which he can put fingers and this way examine it. The motor and intellectual skills should be developed at this stage by including simple puzzle games in the form of boxes or cans with the openings shaped in form of balls, cubes or stars, and the baby should insert the objects of the same shape in it. While the child tries to insert toy parts through the right hole it learns how to plan things. He loves to hit objects and shake them in order to make some sound. While bathing, baby loves to play with toys that float on water.

Between 1 and 2 years of age a child begins to be conscious of himself, gets to know his body and begin to build his personality. As a one year old, a child can already walk, even crawl up the stairs and begins to pronounce his first words. He plays besides other children, but still do not plays with them. This is the time when he also begins to explore surrounding and learn about himself. The educational games and toys will help him to learn about his body parts and develop communication skills. A child needs to stimulate his abilities with the proper selection of toys. During this period, a child begins to build towers out of cubes and then knocks them down, he recognizes the simple characters from the pictures, he plays with the ball and solves simple problems. He needs toy that can stack and experiment with and through them gets to know the world around him. In the second year of life, a child loves to push or pull different kinds of carts, fill them with cubes or other things and fill various buckets with sand.

Some of the toys that child needs in this period are: Stacking Pyramid - the simplest type of this classic toy that consists out of a rod or cone, on which a child should stack the rings of different size. The toy exercise the child's concentration and accuracy, it teaches the kid to notice proportions of the object by the size and colour, it develops fine motor and visual skills as well as the imagination. Cubes - a child starts to play with them with no particular goal - he touches them, twisting and turning or throwing them around. Later on, he will start to stack them one onto another and eventually he will use them as a "building" material for houses, castles, towers, etc. Cars - develop motor skills and arouse imagination. Kids often imagine themselves as a drivers and this way practice social roles. Dolls - serve as a replacement for the humans, and the child that takes care of them this way learns about responsibility, affection and attention.

Between 2 and 3 years of age imagination of the child becomes vivid. As a two year old, a child is rapidly learning language, but also becomes aware of the danger. This does not stop him, but on the contrary, it is causing him to test his limits by jumping off the objects, climbing.... . It starts to act, impersonate and roleplay. In this stage the child is attracted to the materials that can be shaped, drawing and painting kits, he is interested in various percussions, whistles and other musical toys. He likes to paint, especially on the walls. The cause for this lies in the fact that a child in this age has much better control of arm movements when stretched at his eye level, than when he is sitting down. He loves to color and play with plasticine, to assemble the complicated puzzles, build objects out of cubes - in one word, he learns to be patient. He is interested in mechanical toys and likes to play with water. He develops confidence, self-expression, independence. He starts to notice words and detailed pictures out of the picture books. He learns very quickly. Child's agility is developed and he is always in motion.

Between 3 and 4 years of age children are already skilled at controlling their movements. They are constantly exploring the surrounding and their physical abilities as well. They begin to recognize the numbers. They love to imitate and have a desire to create. They love to assemble and shape things out of tiny parts and materials, and they need toys like colours and crayons, puzzles, assembling toys, cubes, tricycle, rocking horse, cars, costumes, children's books, children's hand tools, etc. In this stage of life a child requires to play interactively with other children.

Between 4 and 5 years of age - this is the time for fantasy and independence development. Child can ride a tricycle, assemble complex puzzles, tell a story based on a picture book. In this age, the child should be given the smaller cubes (like LEGO), out of which he can build various objects. They will enhance child's imagination, creativity and fine motor skills. This is a perfect time for car toys, stuffed animals and dolls. Parents should guide children through the activities that encourage emotional, social, intellectual and physical development. This way they will learn the positive social norms and regulations.

Between 5 and 6 years of age a child is interested in every aspect of life, he wants to know all and try everything. He likes to play with the other children or with parents and enjoy the board games, role play. He loves to build, model, draw, use a variety of thematic sets to play, learns to read from children's books. In this period, we should encourage the child to learn facts of life and the world around him, support their self-expression and creativity and prepare them for school. Toys suitable for the child at this age are themed sets for play, simple games, children's books, construction cubes, cars, dolls, crayons

and modeling clay, musical instruments, binoculars, bike, etc. The construction kits which require precision and concentration (Lego blocks, etc) are one of the most important elements of the game at this stage of life.

These types of toys will provide an opportunity to fully express child's imagination and creativity and enable him to research and experiment while playing. Puzzles develops child's capability to solve problems gradually, exercise his patience and need to sit for a longer period of time. Also, they develop spatial imagination and concentration.

Between 6 and 7 years of age child deals with numerous physical, social and emotional changes. He already have well-developed motor and intellectual skills and is pretty independent. He is interested in a more challenging games and activities, also science and research and make-believe games. The creativity and curiosity becomes more complex, but he still loves to play with construction toys, dolls and the complex puzzles. Attractive toys for him are the ones that represent real objects such as kids camera, books, electric trains, simple tools for handwork, kids tools, music instruments, etc. He is more active in sports: he plays football, tennis, drives bike and rollers, jump ropes, hoola hoops, etc. He is very interested in socializing with other children. He starts to learn foreign languages, so it is important to listen to music and watch movies from specific foreign countries. This period characterize the need to play social games that have rules (hide and seek, parcheesi, etc). The importance of these games is that children learn to identify rules, accept them and obey them.

With 7 years of age children social behavior changes. He have increased empathy, he starts to socialize mostly with kids in the same age group, needs contact and participation in common games and have increased competitive spirit.

Children older than 8 years of age need games that will challenge them physically and mentally. Depending on the child's interest, proper toys should be realistic science kits, arts kits, music instruments, sports gear, etc. In this period, girls tend to show interest in the games where they can express elegance and sense of rhythm, while the boys incline to the games where they can express their dexterity and speed.