

Examples of Materials To Help Your Child Play and Learn

Safety notes: The materials you offer children need to be safe for their age level. Be especially careful of small toys or parts that could be swallowed, sharp edges or points, loud noises, cords or strings that might wrap around a child’s neck, and toys used to shoot or throw objects. In buying toys, pay attention to the age level rating on the item.

Young Infants (Birth to 11 Months)

Important: Make sure materials are not small enough to swallow (One test is: If the item would fit inside a toilet paper tube, it is too small.)

- Soft toys, blankets
- Bath toys
- Nesting cups, stackable rings, small boxes or plastic containers of various sizes and shapes
- Plastic container with handle (such as a small bucket) to use as a carrying container
- Safe things to play with that you might have around the house that have a variety of shapes, colors, textures, sounds and smells
- Different sizes of cardboard boxes to climb into, or put things in, or nest, or stack
- Objects with different textures, such as fuzzy, bumpy or smooth
- A basket or floor-height cupboard with items such as small plastic bowls, measuring cups, pans with lids, wooden spoons, plastic containers with lids, empty spools, cardboard tubes, etc.
- Rattle, bell, drum or other safe objects to shake or bang
- Blocks or magnets with letters and numbers
- Mobiles, balls
- Stuffed animals, dolls
- Crayons, washable markers, paint, play dough, clay
- Cloth, board and plastic books
- Books about animals, sounds, nature, shapes and colors, numbers and counting, people from various cultures
- Pictures, photos

Older Infants (9 to 18 Months)

Important: Make sure materials are not small enough to swallow.

Above, plus:

- Songs, rhymes, poems
- Finger paints or shaving cream; chalk and chalk board
- Unbreakable mirrors
- Magnet boards with magnets in different shapes
- Sturdy, low table or stool to climb onto and under
- Alphabet, picture and story books in the home language and English

Toddlers (16 to 36 Months)

Important: Make sure materials are not small enough to swallow.

Above, plus:

- Music for movement, games and dancing
- Dress-up clothes, hats, dolls, stuffed animals, boxes, or other props for pretend play
- Soft puppets, finger puppets
- Large balls and bean bags to toss
- Large beads to string with yarn
- Alphabet blocks or cookie cutters
- Blocks, items that connect, such as plastic “bricks”
- Plastic or metal measuring cups
- Large dishpans to fill with water or sand, and cups, funnels, pitchers, etc. to fill and dump

- Stories, poems, songs (in the home language and English) about a variety of people, places, families, workers, healthy meals, physical activity
- Photos of the child and the family

Ages 3 to 4 Years

Important: Make sure materials are not small enough to swallow.

Above, plus:

- Items to sort by shape and color
- Rhythm instruments using household items: pots and wooden spoons for drums, blocks to clap together, beans in a sealed jar to shake, tin can with lid for a drum, etc.
- Materials to explore and use, such as blocks, cups, small boxes, sand, clay, yarn, cloth
- Plastic, wooden or wax fruits and vegetables
- Puzzles with up to five pieces
- Pictures and stories (in the home language and English) about families, different cultural themes

Ages 4 to 5 Years

Important: Make sure materials are not small enough to swallow.

Above, plus:

- Materials with different textures – such as wet clay, dry sand, smooth cloth, rough sandpaper, etc.
- Containers of different sizes with different kinds of lids and latches
- Items of different shape, size and color to sort (such as blocks, plastic cups, balls, etc.)
- Jump rope, hoop to roll or jump through
- Scooter, wagon, wheelbarrow
- Chopsticks, tongs, turkey baster, wooden clothes pins
- Blunt scissors
- Pictures cut out of magazines, glue stick and large sheets of paper to fold into books or make collages
- Yarn or shoelaces to tie, or lacing cards

- Card or board games that use counting
- Magnifying glass, ruler, measuring cups, measuring spoons, eye dropper
- Jigsaw puzzles with up to 10 pieces
- Picture books, story books, poetry books, magazines
- Activities that require following clear directions, such as cooking, planting seeds or simple science experiments

Age 5 and Kindergarten

Above, plus:

- Stories about people working together to solve problems
- Jump rope, hula hoop
- Paper and pencil for writing
- Magazines, newspapers or other printed materials with pictures to cut out, scissors, paste or glue stick, sheets of paper to staple or fold together into a “book”
- Items from nature: leaves, stones, flower petals, etc.
- Different shapes cut out of heavy paper or cookie cutters in various shapes
- Playing cards
- Sock puppets, finger puppets
- Balloons
- Materials to create art work, such as crayons, paper, fabric, yarn, dried pasta, cotton balls, pipe cleaners, glue or paste, etc.

1st Grade

Above, plus:

- Maps of the local area
- Board games
- Puzzles of 100 to 500 pieces
- Books about topics of interest to the child (fiction and nonfiction)

