



CHOOSING TOYS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

It is often difficult to choose a toy for a child with a special need or disability. It is important to buy something appropriate, but also fun and stimulating. The following considerations may help when buying toys for children with disabilities:

- **Multisensory appeal** – does the toy respond with lights, sounds or movement? Are there contrasting colours? Does it have a scent? Is there texture?
- **Sensory considerations** – bear in mind any sensory difficulties the child may have when assessing the suitability of the toy. Is the child particularly sensitive to flashing lights, or sudden noises?
- **Method of activation** – will the toy respond with lights, sounds or movement? What is the force required to activate? What are the number and complexity of steps required to activate it?
- **Where will the toy be used** – can the toy be used in a variety of positions such as side-lying or on a wheelchair tray? Will the toy be easy to store? Is there space in the home?
- **Opportunities for success** – can play be open-ended with no definite right or wrong way? Is it adaptable to the child's individual style, ability and pace?
- **Current popularity** – is it a toy that any child would like? Does it tie-in with other activities like television programmes, films, books, or clothing?
- **Self-expression** – does the toy allow for creativity, uniqueness, and choice making? Will it give the child experience with a variety of media?
- **Adjustability** – does it have adjustable height, sound volume, speed, level of difficulty?
- **Child's individual characteristics** – does the toy provide activities that reflect both developmental and chronological ages? Does it reflect the child's interests and age?
- **Safety and durability** – consider the child's size and strength in relation to the toy's durability. Are the toy and its individual parts sized appropriately? Does the toy have moisture resistance? Can it be washed and cleaned?
- **Potential for interaction** – will the child be an active participant during use? Will the toy encourage social engagement with others?
- **Ease of use** – can the toy be played with independently? Will it require assistance from a helper?

Use this list to help you when looking at toys in shops and online catalogues. The SNAP library has several specialist toy catalogues available for browsing and the SNAP Directory lists some specialist suppliers in the Toys, Clothing and Specialist Equipment category.