Child’s Play: Toys and Games for Learning Goals

All toys are not created equal. Some toys help children learn valuable social skills and promote learning goals in your classroom. This list can help you decide the best types of toys to purchase or create for your classroom.

Toys that Encourage Cooperation

- **Simple cooperative board games:**
  - “Max: A Cooperative Game” (Family Pastimes)
  - “The Secret Door” (Family Pastimes)
  - “Hoot Owl Hoot!” (Peaceable Kingdom)
  - “Count Your Chickens” (Peaceable Kingdom)
  - Visit this website for more ideas: [http://familypastimes.com/](http://familypastimes.com/)

- **Simple cooperative movement games:**
  - Cooperative musical chairs: Play like traditional musical chairs, except each child must find a place to sit when the music stops. Encourage children to share seats, sit on laps and get creative about helping their friends find a place to sit. When the music stops, remove a chair and help children think of ways to sit.
  - Wagon pull: Encourage children to take turns pulling each other in a wagon.
  - Parachute games: Use small or large parachutes and encourage children to work together to keep a ball bouncing in the middle.

- **Classroom toys**
  - Dominoes
  - Blocks
  - Balance rocker weights
  - Ramps for toy cars

Toys that Encourage Imagination

- Dress-up clothes
- Simple dolls
- Art materials (clay, paint, buttons, collage materials)

Simple Toys that Encourage Literacy and Language

- Alphabet magnets, beads, stamps, blocks
- Puppets
- Writing materials (stationary, pens, pencils, stamps, envelopes)
- Flannel board materials for stories
- Recycled materials from home (phone books, cereal boxes, cook books, instruction manuals)
- Dry-erase boards
Simple Toys that Encourage Math and Problem-Solving
- Geo-boards with rubber or cloth bands
- Tangram puzzles
- Dominoes
- Timers
- Scoops and measuring cups
- Empty boxes and tubes
- Measuring tapes and rulers
- Calendars
- Dice
- Collections of “stuff” for sorting (buttons, stickers, toy cars, seashells, leaves, food labels)

Simple Toys that Encourage Science and Exploration
- Stethoscope
- Magnifying glass
- Mirrors
- Beakers, tubes, pitchers
- Light table
- Magnets
- Collections of items with different scents and textures
- Collection of natural items (leaves, tree branches, grass, seeds)

Simple Toys that Encourage Social Studies
- Maps
- Blueprints
- Blocks
- Board games
- Play money and cash register
- Mirrors
- Timers
- Clothes in a variety of sizes (baby clothes, adult clothes)
- Uniforms and props for dramatic play