

Meet your new aeroplane

Introducing a new toy to your child? **Arundhati Nath** tells you how to do it right

DO you remember the first time you took your baby to a toy store? She must have looked around in excitement and told you that she wants most of what's on display. Possibly, you would have had a tough time convincing her to pick one.

Apart from the fun and play, toys play an important role in introducing children to a variety of colours, textures, shapes and sounds. "Toys play a crucial role in children's life because they improve their senses of hearing, sight, touch and concentration," says Annapurna Manelli, Hyderabad based mum to an eight month old.

Toys foster a kid's imagination and creativity while helping them interact and play with a friend.

Eileen Kennedy-Moore, professor for The Great Courses audio/video series, *Raising Emotionally and Socially Healthy Kids* says, "Kids make friends by doing fun things together. Toys can be a vehicle for them to do that."



HOW TO INTRODUCE NEW TOYS

ONE AT A TIME: Marianne Szymanski, founder and president of Toy Tips, Inc. and co-author of *Toy Tips: A Parent's Essential Guide to Smart Toy Choices* advises parents to introduce one toy at a time. "The best thing about the early years is that all the toys you have received as gifts should be introduced by the level of skill value; once you notice a child begins

something new, follow with a toy to enhance that skill," she says.

PLAYTIME: Anamika Pandey, mum to two little girls, Aditri and Mishika, introduces new toys during play time by playing with them. You can hold out a soft toy of a tiger or dog by telling them, "Look! This is your new tiger or dog!" This will not only interest him in the toy but will also make him remember the names and learn.

TREASURE HUNT: Deepika Zabee, mum to two year old Armaan, says, "I love to introduce a new toy to my kid by surprising him while playing a fun game like treasure hunt. He loves exploring and taking turns while playing." This could be an innovative way to introduce toys.

AGE APPROPRIATE TOYS

Marianne feels that toys should be age-appropriate mainly because of safety reasons. "No child learns the same as another but advancing toys not matched to a child's developmental ability can lead to frustration and unsafe play experiences," she says. We have prepared an age-appropriate guide to toys for your child here.

0-1 year olds

"Mom, dad, siblings and caregivers are the best play things for the first few months," Marianne says. The interaction and bonding with you, your touch and voice gives utmost pleasure to your child. She advises to follow with toys that squish, rattle, squeak and promote sensory stimulation. After three months, start with soft stuffed animal toys or balls, rattles, small push and pull toys, large blocks, safe bath toys and small hardbound baby books. Avoid toys with sharp edges, batteries, magnets, loose parts, balloons and marbles.

1-2 year olds

Your child is a toddler now. He loves being mobile. Some good bets for toys would be simple puzzles, picture books, pop up toys and books, musical toys, large non toxic crayons, CDs to listen to nursery rhymes, dolls and dress up accessories, kitchen sets, wooden toys or puzzles, small ride on toys and sorting and nesting toys. Ensure that the toys are well made, big in size, without small parts or sharp edges and are light weight and non toxic. Avoid toys painted with lead or which contain harmful chemicals like cadmium or arsenic.

4-5 years olds

Your kid is a preschooler now and making him play with toys that solve problems would make it fun. Get him basic board games, paints and papers for drawing, advanced picture books, basic

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musical instruments, basic crafts with glue, round edged scissors and paper folding, modeling clay, cars and train sets, etc. Avoid electrical or battery operated toys or let the child play with these only under adult supervision. ■

