



TOY SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS, CAREGIVERS

For everyone with all toys:

Carefully check toys, both when they're new and every so often to see whether there's wear and tear. You're particularly looking for any parts that are loose or could easily break off and be swallowed or cut the child.

When your child gets a new toy, and periodically after that, check whether the toy has been recalled by going to saferproducts.gov

Evaluate whether particular toys are appropriate for *your* children, starting with the minimum age warning label. But even if your child is "old enough," they may not be able to be trusted to play with the toy as intended. In addition, consider whether your child is also responsible enough to keep the toy out of reach of any younger children.

Be leery of toys from unfamiliar sellers or international sellers. They may be more likely to sell counterfeit toys or toys that don't meet U.S. safety standards.

When researching a toy, check whether the manufacturer has its own, official website. "A responsible, legitimate company will have their own website," said Lawrence of The Toy Association. "They also will likely sell their product directly on

their site or will have a list of official retailers with links to purchase." If there is a website, pay attention to red flags like typos, spelling mistakes and poorly photoshopped pictures in the product's online description.

Research reviews of a toy. Pay attention to negative reviews and if there aren't many reviews at all, which could suggest a problem.

Look for labeling on toys that says it's non-toxic.

Make sure that anything that's electric says it's UL-approved.

Vintage toys are great for the memories, but be wary of toys made before 2008, when the [Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act](#) took effect. Toys that comply with that law are safer in many ways. The law set new limits on lead, phthalates and heavy metals, and requires third-party testing to make sure toys meet ASTM F963-17, which is the Standard Consumer Safety Specification for Toy Safety that covers a range of potential hazards in toys.

Report incidents involving toys to the CPSC at saferproducts.gov

For younger children:

For any toys with plastic film coverings on toys to protect them during shipping, be sure to remove the film. It can pose a choking hazard to children.

Keep small balls, blocks and other toys with small parts out of reach from children younger than 3.

High-powered tiny magnets are now prohibited from being manufactured. But the new federal rule doesn't affect magnets that may be in people's homes. If you have children or teens in your home, you shouldn't have tiny magnets, the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) says. Also explain to your kids how dangerous these magnets are, in case they come across them at a friend's house.

Keep deflated balloons away from children younger than 8 and keep your ears open for an inflated balloon that pops. Balloons that haven't been blown up and ones that have broken are a choking hazard.

For children younger than 18 months, keep them away from toys with any strings, straps, or cords longer than 12 inches.

If there are batteries, especially button batteries, make sure the compartments are secure and can't be opened by a young child. In addition, make sure to never leave new or used batteries where children can reach them.

Watch out for painted jewelry, cheap metal or other toys with paint that seems to chip easily. We know young children often put things in their mouths. The objects could contain lead, which is particularly harmful to developing brains and nervous systems.

For older children:

For scooters, hoverboards and other riding toys, require your child to wear safety gear – particularly helmets that fit properly, said Dr. Jerri Rose, associate division chief of pediatric emergency medicine, UH-Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital in Cleveland. Also make sure they understand how to ride on streets shared by vehicles that can injure or kill them. Just because a child is a certain age doesn't automatically mean they can be trusted. "Maybe they're not ready to be responsible," Rose said. "Parents need to make sure their child is able to handle those in a safe way."

For those with techy toys:

If you are thinking of buying your child an internet-connected toy:-
Research the toy's potential safety risks before buying. Ensure there are no reports of a toy posing known dangers to children. Search the toy manufacturer online to see if there are any news reports or government actions against it for violating privacy standards, and avoid those with a spotty record. Looking up reviews of the toy may also help you identify toys that have made parents feel uncomfortable.

Understand all of the toy's features. Make sure you understand exactly what the toy can do. Consider what features will work best for your family.

Features to consider carefully:

- Cameras, microphones or sensors
- Chat functions
- Location sharing
- In-app purchases

- Level of individual personalization the toy is programmed to accomplish

Features that can be helpful:

- Parental safety controls
- Ability to set time limits

Look for toys with a physical component to connect it to the internet: This can even be as simple as having a button on the toy you must press in order to link it to other devices. Ensuring someone must physically interact with the toy helps cut down on the risks of strangers abusing its internet connection. Some toys will require you to enter a password in an app to connect with the toy. This is a good feature to have, but physical requirements are best.

Read the terms and conditions. Terms and conditions aren't fun or easy to read, but when it comes to toys, it's important for parents to read enough to try and find answers to key questions. These include:

- If the toy has a microphone or a camera, is it recording your child's interactions with it? Are those communications transferred anywhere? To whom, and for what purpose?
- Is the toy collecting any other information about your child, or transferring it to any company that isn't the manufacturer? Best to find manufacturers and toys that don't share any data at all.
- How long does the company keep your child's data on file? The company should only keep data for as long as is required to fulfill its play function. If the policy doesn't explicitly state how long the

company keeps data, this can be a red flag.

- Does the company state it is allowed to change terms and conditions without notifying you? This can be a red flag, too.

Unfortunately, it's possible you won't find the answers to all of these questions in the terms and conditions or privacy policies. These documents can be purposefully vague and omit important information. If this is the case, it's safer to find a different toy made by a company that takes the security of children more seriously.

Supervise playtime, especially with younger kids. Establish with your child that playtime with the toy is only with parental supervision. This helps to ensure that if someone is hacking and using the toy to interact with your child, you can take action immediately.

Turn it off. Always turn the toy off when not in use. For younger children, store it in a place your child can't reach when playtime is over to ensure they can't turn it on without supervision, re-enabling the toy to pose unmonitored risks.

Stay on top of security updates. Many web-enabled toys and their companion apps will issue periodic updates. Make sure to stay on top of these.

For more tips and other information:

saferproducts.gov

playsafe.org

**[kidsindanger.org/
protect-your-child/
play/](http://kidsindanger.org/protect-your-child/play/)**