



# SPECIAL NEEDS TOY GUIDE

A Resource for Therapists and Families





## Dear Parents and Friends,

25 years ago, we began making classic toys for kids . . . and opened a dialogue with families that has been ongoing ever since. One of the most rewarding things about doing what we do has been talking with those families, and hearing about the ways they play with our toys—sometimes in ways we never imagined! Especially close to our hearts are the moms, dads, teachers, and therapists who use our toys to help children with special needs.

We've heard from the family of Robbie, whose passion for our puzzles gives his days focus and opens channels for communication. Eli's parents told us how four different therapists used our toys to help their partially blind son understand the world around him. The father of Truman, a two-and-a-half-year-old with brain injuries, wrote to us about the unexpected developmental strides he credited to his son's beloved chunky puzzles. We got a note of thanks from the mom of Matthew and Jake, two puzzle-loving brothers with autism (and a call from then-seven-year-old Jake himself!). You've shared with us your stories of morning play routines, growing interpersonal connections, a newfound interest in game play, and first words. You've warmed our hearts and inspired us to do our best every day to bring you the very best toys we can.

Dr. Melissa Liguori also reached out to us with her story: As a child therapist, she was always on the lookout for activities to engage her patients, keeping them entertained as they worked on cognitive, sensory, learning, and other developmental areas. She was struck by how well suited Melissa & Doug toys are for exceptional children, and began working many of them into her therapies. Through her close work with families, she was also aware of their concern over the high cost of therapy and therapeutic products, and was proud to be able to recommend our toys as an affordable option!

Your letters and Dr. Liguori's trained eye are the force behind this catalog, designed for parents, therapists, and educators of children with special needs. In its pages, you can shop by developmental need, get play ideas, and read expert advice on adding skill-building fun to playtime. We hope the ideas inside bring you and your child new horizons and lots of joy!

*Melissa & Doug*

## Dr. Melissa Liguori, Ed.D:

After studying early childhood education at the American University in Washington, D.C., Dr. Liguori began her career as a classroom teacher in one of the nation's top school districts, Montgomery County, Maryland. There she fostered an environment where play and learning were synonymous, and her reputation for thinking outside the box when it comes to toys began. Dr. Liguori completed her doctorate in Developmental and Learning Psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University, and worked at prestigious private schools in New York, New Jersey, and the surrounding suburbs before settling her family and practice in Westport, Connecticut.



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Many of the products featured benefit more than one skill area. Watch for these icons throughout the book to learn about the many ways each toy can help your child learn and grow!





## FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Part of the essential work of early childhood is learning to properly and precisely use the muscles in the hands and fingers—in other words, building fine motor skills. These skills, mastered during childhood, enable everyday life skills such as fastening, zipping, cutting, and writing. Parents may be familiar with the technical names for many fine-motor milestones, such as *pincer grasp* (the ability to grasp objects with the thumb and forefinger) and *tripod grasp* (the ability to hold a pencil properly). But even with no special background, you'll likely notice these abilities during play. Nurture them with these toys and games—favorites of occupational therapists and teachers, and now collected here for you!

### Deluxe Wooden Standing Art Easel

This sturdy, double-sided, adjustable easel is for fine-motor fun! A dry-erase board on one and a chalkboard on the other are both great for handwriting practice, while the child-friendly art paper is perfect for holding art paper. Writing on a vertical surface helps with proper wrist positioning, promoting a more functional grasp for kids who are learning writing skills or just need a little practice. Perfect for budding artists, too!





## Suspend

This exciting, fun-filled game highlights fine motor control and requires balance, a steady hand, and hand-eye coordination. A variety of leveled instructions helps tailor the game to different abilities—kids will take pride in their achievement when they progress to more difficult maneuvers. It's the perfect game to encourage teamwork when working with groups of children, too: Together kids can formulate a plan for their next move! Also incorporates problem solving, coordination, and motor planning.



## My Own Mailbox

Children love sending and receiving mail! This interactive writing set is ideal for fine motor practice and letter formation. The lined wipe-off letter provides a visual cue for beginning writers to stay between the lines. The set also includes reusable postcards, stamps, and stickers, so children can “send” mail over and over, enjoying endless imaginative play.



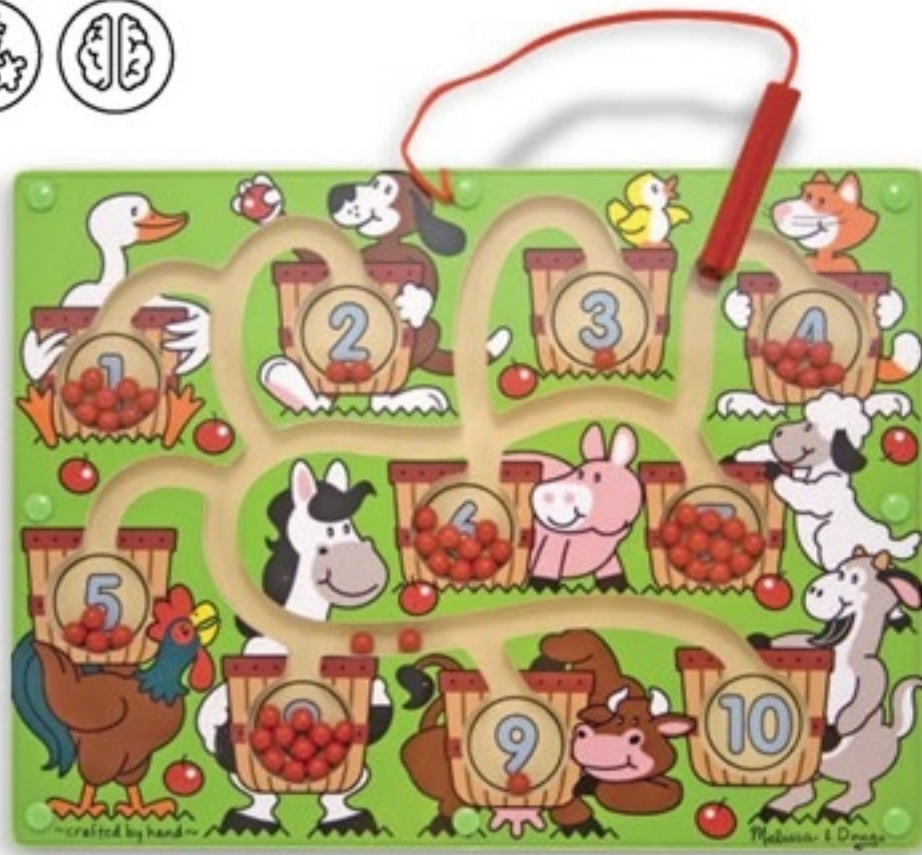
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## Magnetic Number Maze

This counting activity builds visual tracking, problem solving, and hand coordination, as well as dexterity and proper grip. Children use the magnetic to manipulate the red balls, counting as they allot a quantity to each number basket. Bonus: All of the pieces are contained under the sturdy acrylic cover perfect learning toy to take on the go! *Also available: Magnetic Color Maze.*



*“This is great for early math skills—my daughter loves counting the balls as she drops them into each well!”*

-Adam (Sarah's dad)

## Sort & Snap Color Match

While manipulating these brightly colored caps to copy designs or create their own, children reinforce hand-eye coordination, finger strength, and grasping skills. The caps snap into the sturdy wooden board with some resistance, which strengthens the hands and forearms. Matching the color-coded design templates also emphasizes pattern and color recognition.





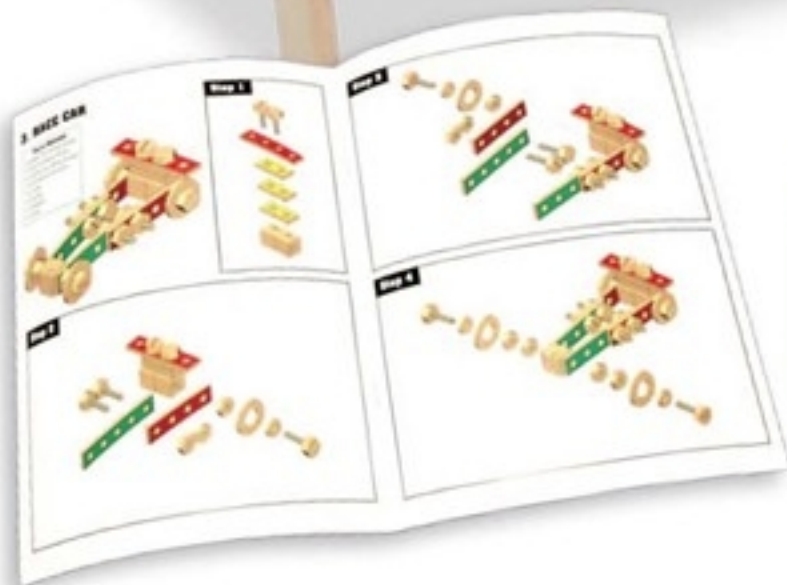
## Doorbell House

Children will happily practice color recognition, counting, and fine motor skills as they explore this wooden house! Four unique locks with small matching keys allow children to open different compartments, each with its own working doorbell and space for one of the four play people included with the set. The secret rooms are also great for hiding rewards to keep kids motivated.



## Wooden Project Workbench

With a how-to book filled with projects to create, this wooden workbench set is a crafty way to build fine motor skills as well as creative thinking. The set includes wooden nuts, bolts, screws, and tools to be manipulated, engaging fine motor skills from multiple angles and keeping interest high.



### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA

Make a simple model or replicate a letter of the alphabet by screwing together just two or three pieces. Then ask the child to copy your creation!





## Wooden Stringing Beads

With shapes, colors, sizes, and all the letters of the alphabet, this bead set helps develop sorting, patterning, matching, and proper grasp—essential for many fine motor skills, including writing skills. Try using beads as a behavior incentive: Reward children with a few at a time to collect and use in one-of-a-kind creations. **Other bead sets available.**



## Peel & Press Sticker by Number Mosaic Butterfly

Build fine motor skills and create a master at the same time! Just peel the plastic stickers from the backing, then position them on the board according to the number guides. The process encourages proper grasp and fine motor control while demanding sustained attention and focus. The result is a glittering picture you'll be proud of! **Other formats and designs available.**

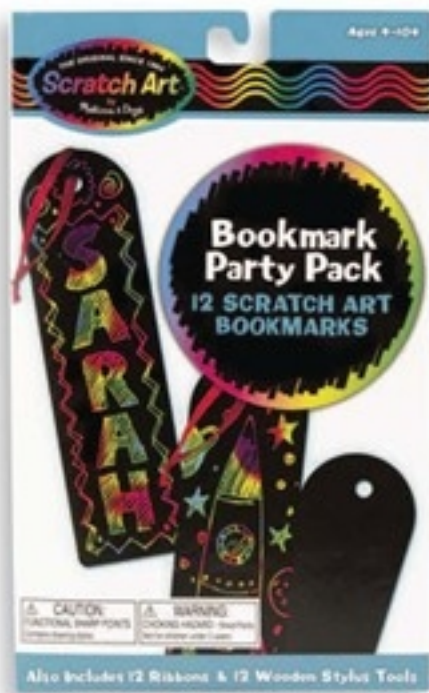


## Jumbo Triangular Crayons

These super-strong plastic crayons are triangular, so they're easy to hold and naturally encourage a tripod grasp (good for future writing skills). Children will love the fact that they won't roll off of the table, too! **Other colors and case designs available.**







## Bookmark Scratch Art Party Pack

Multi-packs of Scratch Art projects are great when working with groups of children at home, school, or parties! Children can practice proper grasp and strengthen the small muscles of the hand while creating unique keepsakes. Encourage kids to create several projects to give as gifts to friends and family! *Other project kits available: Bracelets, Key Chains, Stickers, and more.*



## Pets Scratch Art Drawing Book

Scratch Art—an exciting alternative to ordinary writing—is ideal for children who need fine-motor practice but crave creativity. With the wooden stylus, kids scratch the coated paper to reveal hidden colors! Each project page offers a simple series of illustrated steps, so children will learn to draw adorable animals as they reinforce proper grasp. *Also available: Fashion Friends Drawing Book.*



## Lacing Shoe

Learning to lace and tie shoes can be a challenge . . . but a kid-friendly high-top makes mastering this developmental milestone feel more like fun! Visual step-by-step instructions show just what to do, so kids can practice independently—lacing up the shoe, tying a knot and bow, and undoing the laces to try again—reinforcing fine motor skills all the while.



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## Stop Sign Vehicles Jumbo Knob Puzzle

Oversize handles make this three-piece wooden puzzle ideal for beginners, or anyone working on the small muscle groups of the wrist and hand. Kids will exercise grasp, release, hand-eye coordination, and wrist control, and delight in the ability to manipulate real puzzle pieces! The bright stop-sign background and car pieces offer cues for discussion of car safety, too. *Other designs available.*



## Barnyard Fun Chunky Puzzle Scene

The pieces fit into the wooden puzzle board, or stand up on their own! Create a pretend-play scene to manipulate and discuss, or offer a sequencing challenge: “put in the silo, then the barn.” Help the child learn to use both hands in a coordinated effort by rolling the sun from hand to hand. The shaped pieces require different types of grasp for a well-rounded fine-motor workout. *Other designs available.*







## Tools Chunky Puzzle

Seven wooden tools complete this “handy” puzzle. Children can lift and maneuver the solid pieces into place, matching the pictures to earn a satisfying “I did it!” The kid-size handles are easy to grasp, inspiring endless construction-themed pretend play, too. An exciting addition to your skill-building tool box! *Other designs available.*



## Sea Creatures Peg Puzzle

This peg puzzle makes fine-finger grasp work enjoyable! Pictures under pieces encourage matching skills; pegged pieces strengthen finger grasp and hand-eye coordination as children maneuver them into their places. Complete the scene in the puzzle board or act one out with the pieces—“Hello, there, Mr. Shark. How are you today?”—and you’ll be encouraging social skills, too! *Other designs available.*







### Space Voyage Wooden Jigsaw Puzzle

Engage grasp, finger strength, and hand-eye coordination with this sturdy 48-piece jigsaw. The wooden puzzle frame nicely defines the work space, helping beginners get their bearings as they solve. The exciting picture encourages kids of all ages to complete the puzzle again and again, exercising memory as they recall details of solutions. The spatial and problem-solving skills developed benefit math skills, reading, and more! *Other designs and piece counts available.*



**SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA**

Hide similarly shaped letters in a large box of beans to work on tactile discrimination. Then ask the child to identify the "four" letter with eyes closed.

### Uppercase & Lowercase Alphabet Puzzle

Explore early concepts of language through fine motor play! Illustrated pictures create the background for upper- and lowercase letter pieces in this classic alphabet manipulative. Ask kids to lift the pieces, match them up, then place them on the puzzle board over the picture that illustrates the sound! *Also available: Alphabet Art P*







## Endangered Species Cardboard Floor Puzzle

With a giant format to encourage collaboration and detailed artwork to please all ages, this big jigsaw features 48 pieces made of extra-sturdy cardboard with an easy-clean coating. Piece it together without worrying about bends, breaks, or smudges—even with rough handling, the gorgeous wildlife scene will stay looking great! The giant puzzle format strengthens core body muscles, too, as puzzlers crawl and reach to access every side. *Other designs and piece counts available.*



## Kissing Horses Cardboard Jigsaw Puzzle

This pretty jigsaw depiction of a tranquil countryside scene has smaller pieces, offering a greater challenge to fine motor skills. With 200 cardboard pieces, this detailed puzzle is likely to take an extended time to complete—so the process of solving it also works on attention, focus, and recall. Invite a friend to join you and add in social-skills practice too! *Other designs and piece counts available.*







## Latches Board

This sturdy wooden board provides endless educational entertainment! As children busily operate a variety of mechanisms—such as latches, hooks, and clasps—motor skills are put to the test. Then, as each door opens, children are rewarded with a variety of colors, numbers, shapes, animals, and more! Also great for a memory game: Ask kids to remember what is in each position while the doors are open, and then recall what is in each position when the doors are closed.



## Basic Skills Board

Practice the important skills of zipping, buckling, snapping, tying, and more all in one puzzle! Young children will be delighted to see improvement in these everyday life skills, and will enjoy practicing them with this smiling bear. As an added feature, each piece of the puzzle is removable, allowing children to isolate one skill at a time. After mastering each, return it to the wooden board until the puzzle is complete!





## Lace & Trace Shapes

This brightly colored set of five wooden cards and five extra-thick laces allows children to practice two powerful skill-builders: lacing and tracing. Lay the cards over paper and children can trace their edges to make color-in designs. Or offer one of the colorful laces to weave in and out of the cards—each lace ends in sturdy plastic aglets to make threading through the small holes enjoyable and rewarding, while promoting hand-eye coordination and the correct grasp. Both activities help to maintain sustained focus and attention, too! *Also available: Pets and Farm.*



### SKILL-BUILDING TIPS

**Get creative with everyday tasks to find low-effort, high-interest, skill-building fun!**

- 1 Look for baking projects that call for individually wrapped mini chocolates and enlist the kids to unwrap them all.
- 2 Ask children to sort loose change around the house and then have them place the money into the small slot of a piggy bank. (As a reward, spend the money on a new family game!)
- 3 Ask children to water plants or wash windows using a spray bottle. Encourage them to use only one finger at a time to pump the bottle, strengthening finger muscles.
- 4 Have children place stamps and return-address labels on your mail at home.





## GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

Gross motor skills use the large muscle groups of the body, such as the arms, legs, and torso. Strength and control in these areas help children move through their world with balance and coordination, and helps them adapt to physical changes in their environment—such as walking on uneven surfaces or climbing on playground equipment safely. That means fewer bumps and bruises . . . and more time to play with great skill-building toys like these! Our “best-of” gross motor skills list includes sporty outdoor games, active indoor games, heavy work with water resistance, and great activities for building strength, control, balance, and hand-eye coordination (another great benefit of gross-motor play).

### Verdie Chameleon Beanbag Toss

This double-sided beanbag-toss set is two games in one! On one side, children can try to complete a 1-8 number sequence, aiming for labeled targets. On the other, they toss beanbags into the chameleon tails. Both games reinforce hand-eye coordination, attention, and focus. Have children recite a sentence and toss the beanbag into the “ant” for additional math practice! The game folds for easy storage and is great for traveling therapists.







## Froggy Toss & Grip

Children love playing catch with this fabric catcher and “sticky” ball! The ball clings to the frog, changing the tricky task of catching into an easy, enjoyable game. Because everyone is successful, it’s a self-esteem booster, too! Pull the ball off of the frog to work on strength, then throw it to your partner to work on gross motor skills—it’s all a seamless part of playtime with this cute set. To add to the challenge, ask kids to toss the ball with alternating hands. Also reinforces hand-eye coordination and teamwork! *Also available: Clicker Crab Toss & Grip.*



## Froggy Kickball

Kicking, running, and catching are great fun—and an important part of gross motor development. Encourage these active pastimes with this frog-faced bouncy ball! Use it for kickball, dodgeball, catch, and more. *Other styles available: Bollie Ladybug, Scootin’ Turtle, and Bella Butterfly.*



### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA

Have the children place the ball between their knees and hop! This is sure to get a laugh while working on coordination, strength, and balance.



## Tootle Turtle Egg Race

Balance the baby turtles on the spoon and carry them safely to the finish line before they hatch! This ready-to-go relay race game works on balance, coordination, attention, and teamwork. If the eggs fall, the baby turtles will pop out—an exciting challenge and lots of added fun. For additional gross-motor practice, switch up the rules: Challenge kids to go backward, walk sideways, or even skip while balancing the eggs!







### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA

Increase the challenge for older kids: Ask them to hit the ball up in the air and try to flip the racquet over to hit it again with the other side!

## Tootle Turtle Racquet & Ball Set

A simple hit with the flexible racquet sends these colorful bouncy balls into the air! Every game helps improve hand-eye coordination, motor control (the ability to use muscles purposefully) and balance. A great twist: Ask children to bounce the ball as many times as possible on their racquet while walking in a straight line. Keep track of high scores and compete against friends!



## Rattle Rumble Push Toy

This delightful walking toy encourages early walkers to keep going! Auditory and visual rewards keep rolling with each step, as blocks of various shapes and sizes are tossed and tumbled. The sturdy design offers lots of support as children develop and strengthen the large muscle groups of the trunk and legs when learning to walk.



## Happy Giddy Bowling Set

Children love to knock down bowling pins over and over! This safe, friendly bowling set is sure to keep children entertained. Choose either to roll the ball the traditional bowling style or give it a kick, working on foot-eye coordination. Both ways of playing focus on gaining control of large muscle groups. The plastic pins are lightweight and can be used indoors or outdoors. Comes with a handy bowling bag for storage.







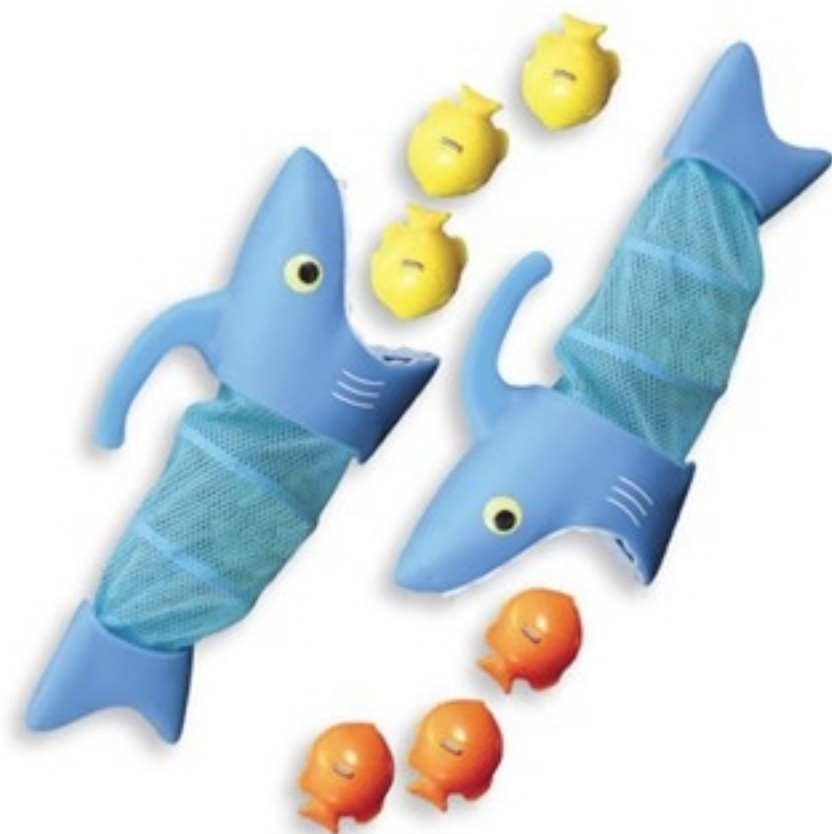
## Spark Shark Kickboard

Pool play develops strength, endurance, and balance in a low-impact environment. Thanks to water resistance, it can also act as heavy work for kids with sensory-processing difficulties. This easy-to-grasp kickboard is especially good for strengthening leg muscles while kicking. Get more than one and have children race to the finish line! *Also available: Dart Dolphin Kickboard.*



## Maritime Mates Memory Game

Drop the shells into the pool and watch them sink to the bottom. Now it's time to go down and make a match! Use them in shallow water to encourage beginning swimmers to get their faces wet, or in deeper water with more advanced children working on diving skills . . . and all the levels in between! Kids will exercise cognitive skills, too, as they match and sort the pieces.



## Spark Shark Fish Hunt

Gobble up the fish with this pair of shark pool toys! The shark pieces are easy to grasp and swoop through the water, and the six fish sinkers offer lots of group-play possibilities. Because the water is a low-impact environment, kids will be engaged for longer periods, strengthening large muscle groups without muscle fatigue or boredom.







## Bella Butterfly Hopscotch

Get back to the basics with this fun hopscotch set, suitable for both indoor and outdoor use. Children can play alone or with a partner while working on the important skills of balance, hopping, and throwing, all of which engage large muscle groups. As an added bonus, children can work on hand-eye coordination while assembling the course and number recognition while playing. When the game is over, the board is easily taken apart for storage.

*Also available: Froggy Hopscotch.*



## Happy Giddy Tunnel

Children will enjoy creeping and crawling through this brightly colored tunnel, strengthening trunk and leg muscles. Crawling requires children to use legs and opposite hands simultaneously, a complex process that benefits coordination and improves with practice. These durable tunnels are perfect for setting up an obstacle course. A great incentive to get children to come through is by having a treat at the other end. Timing children as they crawl through also helps to add to the excitement.

*Also available: Bella Butterfly Tunnel.*





## Froggy Toss & Catch

This simple play set offers many ways to improve motor skills: Children can bounce the balls by themselves and try to catch them in the net, or toss a ball to a friend to catch. Also great for relay races: Ask kids to bounce the ball and catch it a certain number of times, and then run and pass it to the net of the next player. *Also available: Spark Shark Toss & Catch.*



## Tootle Turtle Target Game

This smiling turtle game is sure to please children of all ages. Two red and two green beanbags allow for children to play on teams, competing against each other for points. Toss the beanbag and then use math skills to add up the score aloud. Then pull the self-stick beanbags from the target to help build strength. When working alone, children can keep playing until they reach a given score. Challenge them to reach a points goal of 50 or more!



## SKILL-BUILDING TIPS

To keep gross motor skills growing, keep those kids moving—indoors and out!

- 1 Make a deal with your child to go outside and play every day for at least 15 minutes, rain or shine. Children especially love going outdoors for a walk in the rain!
- 2 Build your very own obstacle course in your home using chairs, a jump rope, and the Happy Giddy Tunnel. Have children climb over the chair, walk through the maze of the jump rope, and through the tunnel. Time them to see if they can beat their own record.
- 3 Playing "Simon Says" or "Freeze Dance" can get kids jumping and moving around indoors. Play with the whole family—children love to see Mom and Dad getting silly with them!





## COGNITIVE SKILLS

The cognitive skills formed in childhood are the building blocks of lifelong learning. Including concepts (such as color, shape, and size) as well as thought processes (such as counting, sequencing, and following directions), cognitive skills help prepare children for later success in problem-solving, reading, and math. And this important mental skill set benefits more than schoolwork: A solid foundation of cognitive skills helps kids navigate everyday tasks with confidence. How can you help? Play smart! Nurture cognitive abilities in an enjoyable way with skill-building games and toys. (Offer a variety of them to enhance learning even more!) Here are some of our favorite ways to play and learn.

### Alphabet Nesting & Stacking Blocks

Children of all ages love stacking blocks! These beautiful nesting blocks feature letters of the alphabet as well as pictures of animals and objects that begin with each letter, teaching children about sound-symbol relationships. Positioning all 10 blocks to build the nearly three-foot tower allows children to practice fine motor skills as well! When playtime is over, the nested blocks store neatly in the included carrying case.







## Shape Sorting Cube

This ultimate self-correcting shape sorter features 12 wooden shapes that fit into the wooden cube, reinforcing problem-solving skills with a rewarding “clunk” each time. With sophisticated styling that appeals to younger kids without seeming babyish, this is a wonderful toy for introducing colors, shapes, and early math concepts, and for testing sequencing skills and memory in kids of any age.

### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA

For older kids, speed drills keep this toy exciting! Set a timer while children insert the pieces as quickly as possible to build attention, focus, and processing speed.



## Rainbow Stacker

Five soft rings squeak, rattle, jingle, crinkle, and stack! This multi-sensory toy helps develop memory, color recognition, sequencing, and sensory experience. The color-coded stacking post is a visual guide to the correct stacking order, offering opportunities for matching and independent play. Or caregivers can challenge children by placing the rings on the floor in different formations, then encouraging kids to follow directions by placing certain rings on the stacker when asked.



## Abacus

This brightly colored abacus is a classic tool for learning math skills, patterning, and color recognition. A perfect visual model when children are learning math sentences (such as  $5+3=8$ ), it's also an ideal tool for learning to count by 10s! Encourage children to first create and then demonstrate math equations by sliding the wooden beads across the wire.







### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDE

On dry land, double the fun by first sending the kids on a scavenger hunt to find the e

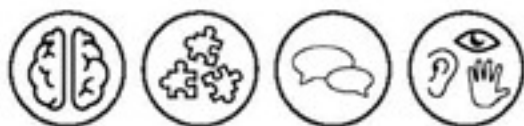
## Taffy Turtle Catch & Hatch

Possibilities for learning are endless with this water-friendly turtle toy. As a cognitive activity during water play, the set reinforces early color and number recognition as well as memory. And it's lots of fun to play! First, reach into the water or swim and retrieve the eggs. Next, open up two eggs to try to make a match. If the number and colors don't match, put the baby turtles back in their eggs and try again.



## Undersea Alphabet Soup Pool Game

This exciting game includes floating letter pieces and a deck of game cards in a sturdy storage pouch. Kids can choose a card to take on a spelling or sorting challenge, or just enjoy exploring letters as they master the alphabet and letter sounds and begin to form words. Seven included games can be played in or out of the pool. Sea-creature artwork reinforces letter sounds and fuels sorting and counting activities, too!





## See & Spell

This beautifully designed wooden puzzle set combines spelling and fine motor fun! Over 60 brightly colored wooden letters fit into recessed puzzle boards, exposing children to 16 early sight-reading words in an exciting tactile way. Scanning and selecting the correct letter enhances visual processing skills and letter recognition. The wooden letters are great for alphabet games, tracing, and sorting, too.



## Pattern Block & Boards

Pattern blocks are the perfect manipulatives to help children learn the properties of shapes, and then to differentiate between shapes. They are also wonderful for creating and identifying patterns, matching, and introducing concepts of same and different. This activity-rich set lets children choose one of the design templates to follow or create their own. It is also a classic learning tool for discussing fractions and math vocabulary such as *part* and *whole*. **Also available: *Beginner Pattern Blocks*.**



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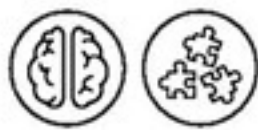
## Bead Sequencing Set

This brightly colored wooden bead set includes more than 45 beads and 5 double-sided pattern cards of varying difficulty. Offer it to children to help them explore patterns, working memory, and processing speed. To make the task more challenging, show children the pattern card for a few seconds, then take it away when asking them to reproduce the pattern on one of the five wooden dowels. Parents will love that all of the pieces are easily contained in the sturdy wooden box with a see-through lid.



## Self-Correcting Number Puzzles

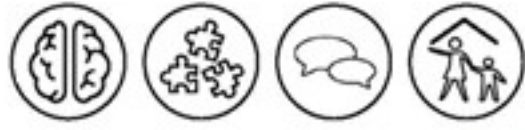
These self-correcting number puzzles are perfect for early learners. Each piece only one match, so children can solve each mini puzzle on their own. The correct match fits into place with ease, helping children pair the numbers 1-20 with pictures of objects to count and reinforcing the connection between numerals and quantities. Use it to boost fine motor skills, too! *Also available: Self-Correcting Letter Puzzles*





## Play Money Set

This wooden cash drawer holds a wealth of familiar-looking bills and coins. Children can set up their own pretend store: pricing items, selling them, and making change for customers. Or use the currency (300 bills and 250 coins in all) as counting tools when learning to count by 5s, 10s, and 25s. The set helps develop a sense of symbolic thinking (for instance, equating a coin with a specific value), as well as sorting and counting skills.



### SKILL-BUILDING TIPS

**Develop cognitive skills by integrating these at-home exercises into your everyday routine:**

- 1** Practice sorting skills when asking children to help divide the laundry into piles of darks, whites, and towels. When the laundry is done, they can reinforce their matching skills by pairing up the socks!
- 2** Practice counting and recording data by asking children to count the numbers of windows or doorknobs in your house. They can compare their findings to a friend's house or Grandma and Grandpa's when visiting. Encourage children to make a chart or table displaying their findings.
- 3** Have children practice their fraction skills in the kitchen by doubling a recipe or cutting one in half! Children can also learn about different measurement terms, such as cup, quart, liter, and gallon, when preparing a tasty treat like lemonade.





## SPEECH & LANGUAGE

Getting children to express themselves in an articulate manner takes practice . . . and there's no more appealing way to practice than with toys! The toy sets and games highlighted here keep interest high and ideas flowing to promote better speech in a number of ways: Make-believe activities can benefit expressive language skills (the ability to convey a message to others through words). Storytelling toys help children master longer, more coherent sentences. Toys and games that inspire inquiry (through *who*, *what*, *when*, *why*, and *how* questions) help kids become more proficient communicators, too. Browse this section to find all of these types of beneficial activities, plus skill-building play ideas and much more!

## Smarty Pants Card Sets

Children of all ages love trivia games! These friendly trivia cards are available in seven levels, from preschool to fifth grade. Asking children to read and respond to the cards aloud reinforces expressive and receptive language skills in an exciting way. The game is even more fun when working as a team, which is also great for social skills, conflict resolution, and problem solving.



### 7 LEVELS AVAILABLE

- Preschool
- Kindergarten
- 1st Grade
- 2nd Grade
- 3rd Grade
- 4th Grade
- 5th Grade







## Wooden Bear Family Dress-Up Puzzle

With 45 changeable pieces, kids can give Mama, Papa, and Baby different outfits and emotions to discuss . . . than change the pieces to change the narrative. A familiar story line, such as “Goldilocks and the Three Bears,” is a perfect tool for children learning to organize and describe events. Storytelling with this engaging play set also offers exposure to descriptive language such as *small*, *medium*, and *large*, as well as ordinal numbers like *first*, *second*, and *third*. As an added bonus, children will be practicing their fine motor skills as they assemble the puzzle pieces!



**“My son is usually shy, but playing and telling stories on a smaller-than-life scale helps him feel more confident about trying out new language.”**

-Beth (Charlie's mom)



## Complete the Picture Pad

Dozens of background scenes (12 unique designs repeated four times) fill this tablet of premium paper. Use them as story starters for children who may have trouble thinking about what to write or draw. Have children complete a scene, and then write or tell a story about their drawings. Makes that first step a little bit easier for children of all ages!



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## Whittle World Train & Platform Set

“All aboard!” Children will love playing with this handsome wooden play set featuring passengers, a conductor, a train with moving parts, and more. With lots of pieces to connect, load, unload, move, and switch, pretend-play scenarios have plenty of raw material. Have children tell a story aloud as they play, which requires them to organize and describe events (skills that can also benefit reading comprehension). Speaking aloud is great oral-fluency practice, too! Challenge kids to provide specific elements of a story, such as the names of characters, plot, setting, and resolution before recording their adventure on paper. **Also available:** *Whittle World Rescue Set, Whittle World Farm & Tractor Set, and more.*



### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA

Use the clock to help children tell a story about their day using clock and time vocabulary.



## Shape Sorting Clock

Telling time has its own vocabulary with terms such as *half past* and *quarter to* and concepts of *before*, *after*, and *late*. This colorful clock is a perfect way to share this language with kids as they sort the pieces, push the hands, and explore visual cues on the clock face, encourage kids to talk through the time with you. Use the clock to help them tell a story about their day using time vocabulary. They'll be building familiarity with concepts of time and practicing communication skills too!







## Deluxe Magic Set

This fantastic set includes 10 easy-to-master tricks for beginner magicians. Learning and performing the illusions reinforces fine motor skills and expressive language. The simple tricks help build confidence in kids who might be apprehensive about speaking in front of an audience. Watch self-esteem grow right before your eyes!



## The Box Girls Family Dinner Box of Questions

Dinner is a great time to get kids talking! The family-oriented questions in this 82-card set make a perfect addition to mealtime. Pick a conversation starter, such as "What is the coziest place in your home?" Then ask kids to answer in complete sentences ("The coziest place in my home is \_\_\_\_"). Encourage fluency with parts of speech by asking children to be descriptive, including adjectives and adverbs in their answers. *Other themes available: Family Dinner Faith Edition, Family Road Trip, and more.*







### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA

Ask children to first repeat your instructions aloud to review both expressive language and auditory processing.

## Seafood Sandwich Stacking Game

This exciting game can be played in the pool or on dry land! Players pick a recipe card, spin the spinner, and then stack a sandwich with cute, “tasty” creatures. Great for reviewing sequencing and following oral directions. A variety of leveled cards allows players to adjust the complexity of the task, stacking two or three creatures to a sandwich, then building up to five or six in a specific order to put motor skills and memory to the test!



## Vehicles Maze Puzzle

Nine vehicles slide around the board on slotted tracks—but can be removed or lost! Practice following directions by asking children to accomplish a sequence of oral commands, such as “Bring the police car to the house, then the school, then back to the station” or ask children to narrate a story about the scene to promote oral fluency and a focus on sequence, plot, and setting.



## Shape Sequence Sorting S

Use this wooden block set as a tool to build expressive and receptive language skills, and see how fine motor skills grow, too! The various shapes, sizes, and colors provide endless ways to use language. For example, practice on receptive language by asking children to remove blocks of one shape, size, or color. (Make the task more challenging with a sequence of spoken instructions such as, “Put in the small green triangle, then the large orange squares, then the blue octagons.”) Or ask children to remove the blocks in any order they choose, describing each block as they go.





## Three Little Pigs Play Set

Children will love experiencing the classic story of "The Three Little Pigs" with this delightful nesting set. The set includes three soft nesting houses, the three squeaking pigs, the big bad wolf, and a story sheet, which makes for a perfect speech and language activity. To get the most out of your playtime: After reading the story aloud, ask children to retell the story in their own words using the props as they go. Retelling helps children learn the important elements of a story, such as the characters, plot, sequence, and setting.



### SKILL-BUILDING TIPS

**Play and learn together to help kids develop speech and language skills.**

- 1** Make up a story with one or more children word by word. Each player says only one word, then the next person has to respond with another word that would make sense to help complete a thought in proper sequence. For example, the first person says, "I" followed by the next that says, "went," followed by "to," and on and on. It's exciting to see how a single word can change the direction of the whole story! This activity also encourages children to think about how to use words in the correct order in a sentence.
- 2** Pick a poem of the week to have children read, memorize, and then recite. You'll expand knowledge of poetry and poets, as well as the important skills of memorizing and public speaking . . . it's even more fun when Mom and Dad learn the poems as well! Compile all of the learned poems in a book that can be illustrated together as a family.
- 3** Encourage children to read anything and everything! Challenge pre-readers to identify signs or symbols they might recognize around town. "Reading" and identifying stop signs, fast-food logos, and billboards are all early-literacy skills!





## SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL

Children learn social and emotional skills in so many ways: gatherings with family, storybooks, time with friends, and, of course, through play! Imaginative playtime is an especially helpful tool for children who may resist talking about feelings or emotions; using certain toys and play activities lets them feel safe and confident as they share their thoughts with others. Caregivers can help by providing children with toys that help mimic family life, that express emotions in non-verbal ways, or that offer up open-ended opportunities for kids to explore everyday themes in creative ways. Being in a fun-filled, friendly environment also benefits emotional development, so support your child by playing together . . . and have fun!

## Deluxe Puppet Theater

Children of all ages respond to puppets in a magical way. This sturdy wooden puppet theater is the perfect stage for your performance, and explore any topic in a lighthearted, non-threatening way. Using puppets is an effective way to pass a message across to children, such as how to be kind to others, the importance of doing good deeds, what to do if someone is bullying you, and much more. Great for home or school.



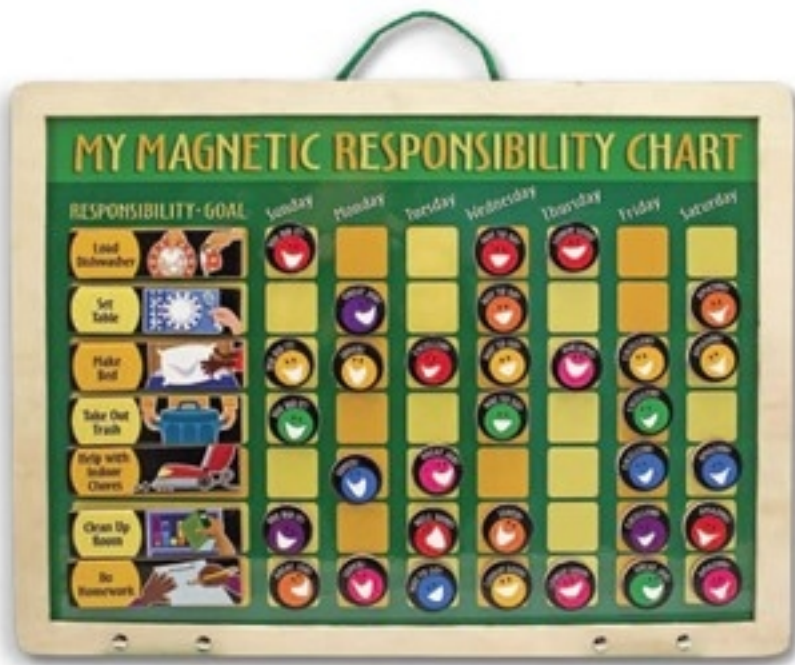
*“My children entertain us for hours with wild stories about dragons and kings!”*

-Karen (Cara and Ben's mom)



## Make-Your-Own Monster Puppet

Never make the same monster puppet twice! This fuzzy friend has lots of interchangeable parts to mix, match, and switch around. The easy-to-transport carrying case holds lots of different eyes, ears, antennae, and more! With a simple hand-puppet sleeve this friendly monster is easy to use, so children can operate the mouth as they use the puppet's "voice" to express their own ideas and emotions. A great ice breaker when working with children of all ages!



## My Magnetic Responsibility Chart

Give children a sense of responsibility and help improve self-esteem with this beautifully designed magnetic board. Reward good behaviors (such as sharing and showing respect) as well as chores (like clearing off the table and taking out the trash). Blank magnets are included so you can create your own tasks as well! As with any reward system, an early sense of achievement can help children feel invested and motivated—so start with just one or two tasks then gradually increase the number of desired behaviors or tasks.



## Fold & Go Dollhouse

This delightful wooden house is ready for hours of pretend play. It includes two flexible wooden people and eleven pieces of furniture to help stories begin. Children can recreate family experiences or act out imaginary situations, allowing caregivers to get a glimpse into their thoughts and beliefs, or gather insights about relationships and family members. Simply fold the house in half and grasp the wooden handles to take it to go—it's ideal for traveling therapists!



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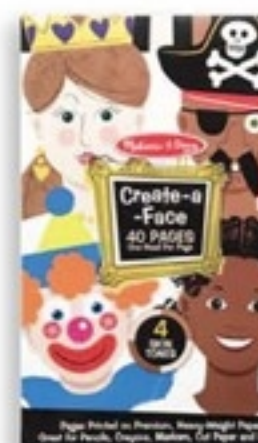
## The Box Girls Truth or Dare Box of Questions

Use these cards to break the ice with new friends or to kick off family game night! Players choose a card and are given crazy tasks, such as singing *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* like an opera singer or wearing a toilet-paper wig! Children can gain confidence in front of others and expand social skills as they giggle with family and friends. **Other themes include: Slumber Party, BFF, and Camp Bunk.**



## Create-a-Face Pad

Forty blank faces of varying skin tones await expressions, accessories, and any emotion your child wants to express. This coloring pad helps caregivers explore emotions with children one-on-one, and the extra-large pages make it perfect for small groups, too. Ask children to draw different emotions, such as excitement, sadness, or anger.



### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA

After reading a story, ask children to draw the way a character was feeling. Then ask children to describe their creations for others to improve public speaking skills and help boost self-esteem!

*“These pads have given us a whole new way to communicate with each other.”*

-Michelle (Cecilia and Scott's n

## Create-a-Person Pad

Children spend a lot of time dreaming about what they want to be when they grow up. These blank figures can become princesses, football players, doctors, or anything else children can think of! This unique drawing pad allows even young children to express creativity and ideas easily, since the body is already drawn for them. The heavy-duty paper is also great for cutting out and pasting onto posters!





## Annie Drink & Wet Doll

Great for toilet training and imaginative play, Annie comes fully equipped and ready to learn! After “drinking” her milk, she wets in her diaper or potty. When kids are ready, Annie can model the proper steps to toilet training, helping build autonomy and self-esteem. Even earlier, children can build social and communication skills as they play parent and show Annie what to do.



## Doll Family

Children may have difficulty articulating feelings about a family situation, such as a new baby, a divorce, or grandparents moving in. This set, with grandparents, mother, father, daughter, son, and baby, helps act out perceptions of family life and major events, opening the door to discussing a variety of family situations.



## SKILL-BUILDING TIPS

**Offer children the opportunity and confidence to practice, and social skills will bloom!**

- 1** Use your local library: With your child, check out children's books on a variety of topics, such as making friends, losing a pet, or parents divorcing. These sometimes painful experiences are often well explained in books you can share. They are also great conversation starters for kids who might be hesitant to share their feelings.
- 2** Encourage older children to keep a journal. Writing is a wonderful outlet for kids who may not be ready to discuss their feelings just yet. Later, parents can ask kids to go back through their entries and choose a topic to share when the time is right.
- 3** Encourage socialization with play dates from the start! Children might not actively play with each other as toddlers, but it is never too early to get children together. Concepts of sharing and taking turns can be introduced at young ages. It's nice for moms or caregivers to get together to talk about parenting challenges, too!





## LIFE SKILLS

Every day, children encounter new experiences all around them. But the frightening feeling of facing something new can be easier to handle when kids have the tools they need to cope. Help them prepare with toys and games that nurture make-believe, allowing them to play roles and tell stories. By acting out planned activities, kids gain familiarity and comfort before they embark on a new adventure, helping them prepare socially and emotionally. As confidence grows and stress calms, children may even feel better about unexpected situations they haven't rehearsed. Play with variables in each game to improve imagination and problem-solving skills, helping kids develop the resiliency they need when things don't go according to plan.

## Shopping Cart

Get your little shopper ready for a trip to the grocery store with this realistic metal shopping cart. It is sized for children and has pivoting front wheels, which makes it easy for little ones to maneuver. Children will enjoy setting up a store at home and then "shopping" with the cart with healthy fruits and vegetables. Parents can also discuss their trip to the store ahead of time with their children, showing them the procedure for filling the cart, who will push, where they might go, or how important it is to hold onto the cart when shopping with Mom or Dad.







## Surgeon Puppet

Get ready for a trip to the doctor or hospital with this surgeon puppet—a perfect prop for calming nervous patients of all ages. Even during a routine visit, simple tasks such as waiting to see the doctor, getting weighed, and having blood pressure taken can be frightening for children. Acting out these steps helps prepare children in advance and allows for a more relaxed experience for everyone involved.



## Waitress Role Play Set

Children can run the show while playing restaurant with this dress-up role-play set. Each important step—such as waiting for a table, reading the menu, and placing an order—can be previewed from both sides of the counter as kids play the role of both server and customer. The advance rehearsal will help kids feel more confident and comfortable when dining out. Bonus: The dry-erase order ticket is easy to bring along to dinner!

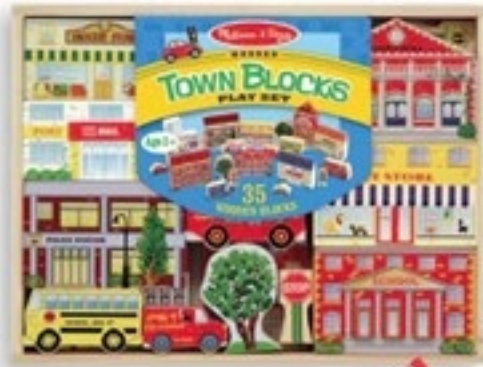


## Hair Stylist Role Play Set

Having a haircut can feel traumatic for many children. This helps put them at ease with their own smock, pretend scissors, comb, mirror, and even a hair dryer with realistic sound effects! Kids can get used to the feeling of having someone style their hair, and will love the opportunity to give “haircuts” to others as a way to prepare for the big day.

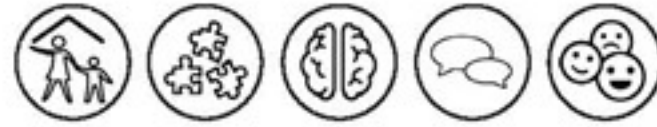






## Town Blocks Play Set

Running errands with little ones is no easy task. Prepare children ahead of time with this 35-piece set of town-themed blocks. Setting up a town then mapping out a route before leaving home can help kids feel prepared for outings, whether that means a quick trip to the grocery store or an afternoon of errands.



## Whittle World Plane & Luggage Carrier Set

What a great way to prepare young travelers for a trip! This set comes with the plane, luggage, and more, so adults can explain the process of boarding and taking off step by step. The process of walking onto the plane, getting a seat, and putting luggage away can be overwhelming for children. Act out these situations with children during playtime, and they'll be ready for takeoff in no time!



## Whittle World School Bus Set

Waiting at the bus stop, getting on and off of the school bus, and greeting the teacher all seem easier after children have a chance to role-play the scenario. This 10-piece set helps kids practice routines and gain familiarity with school-related language themes. Acting out these steps with students provides them with feelings of comfort and security when they need it most.



### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA

Invite children to narrate their own make-believe stories to get a peek inside their view of school.







## Trunki

Children will find comfort in decorating, packing, and then being responsible for pulling along their cherished items when going away. This kids' suitcase also doubles as a ride-on toy—priceless in busy airports! Travel tip: Allow children to pack one or two meaningful items, such as a special stuffed toy or bedtime book, to ease the transition of being away. *Other colors available.*



## Birthday Party! Wooden Play Food

Parties can be a source of stress for many children—especially at cake time, when the room may be loud and dark. To help prepare, act out parties ahead of time, breaking them down into small steps so kids know what to expect. This sliceable set helps stage a dry run: Add decorations, sing the birthday song, and even blow out the fake candles!



## SKILL-BUILDING TIPS

### Give your child the preparation and tools to handle any new event that comes along.

- 1 Take pictures of a new school, doctor, and other "first time" places. Create a book and simple story to read together before a visit. This will help prepare children and make these visits less stressful for everyone.
- 2 Create a visual schedule at home for your busy youngster. Review the schedule each morning so children can anticipate the day ahead of them as well as any changes to their routine. Preparing children ahead of time can help ensure smoother transitions throughout the day.
- 3 Show children online pictures of places they will be visiting. The internet is a great place to share videos and pictures of popular vacation spots, rides, and attractions from all over the world. Seeing these things ahead of time eliminates the element of surprise, allowing children to respond to new experiences in a positive manner.





## SENSORY AWARENESS

Sensory processing is the ability to take in and respond to the sensory information in the environment. This input can come in many forms, including auditory, visual, tactile, and movement. At times, sensory information can become overwhelming or confusing for kids, causing difficulty in social situations or everyday activities. How can playtime help? Practice! In a low-pressure setting with a focus on fun, children may be more willing to experience various textures, materials, and sounds. This is also an ideal time for heavy work—the loading, carrying, lifting tasks that help us feel located in a definite place in space. As kids get used to sensory input in play, they'll be better equipped to cope with stimuli in everyday life too.

## Super Model Sculpting Compound

Children will delight in expressing their artistic side with this colorful eight-pack of sculpting compound. Budding artists can knead the compound to blend the various colors together and sculpt one-of-a-kind air-dry artworks. The material provides resistance, encouraging both sensory and fine motor development. It also makes a soothing fidget for children who concentrate and focus better on something in their hands to manipulate.







**“Great for sensory-seeking kids because it is thicker and more gel-like than other paints we have tried.”**

-Aleka (Washington mom)

## Finger Paint Set

Children love to paint, and using their fingers and hands to make art is a great sensory activity. Some children may not like “messy” activities that get their hands dirty, so getting them to finger paint may be a process. Allow children to start slowly, perhaps just dipping one fingertip in the first time and then gradually working up to full finger-paint fun! The red, green, yellow, and blue paints mix beautifully, encouraging tactile exploration as colorful swirls and blended colors appear. Parents love that the paints are washable and come in safe plastic containers with easy-grip, screw-on lids.



## Velvet Sticker Collection

The pages in this jumbo pad have a delightful velvet feel! The 200+ flocked stickers are perfect for sensory input, encouraging exploration of a new texture as kids color them in, stick them on notebooks and artworks, or create a sticker scene or story. Stickers are also easy rewards when reinforcing positive behavior! Keep an ongoing behavior chart for children and set a realistic goal. (For example, a behavior rewarded five times with a sticker gets a prize.) Prizes can be anything from extra reading time with Mom or Dad to a small toy that kids have been wishing for!

**Also available: Velvet Sticker Collection - Blue.**



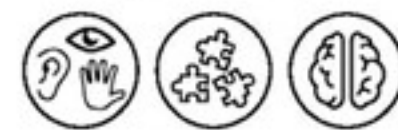
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## Grand Piano

This classically styled grand piano is perfect for any home or classroom. Children will be delighted by how easy it is to play nine familiar songs, the included song chart and color-coded chart. Getting children accustomed to loud and soft noises as well as fast and slow notes adds to the sensory fun of it all! This is great for fine motor coordination. Non-tip bench included.



## Band-in-a-Box

Everything you need for your very own marching band is included in this child-friendly musical instrument set. Various instruments provide a wide range of sounds, exposing children to different tones, volume, and rhythm. For children who might be sensitive to volume, use repeated gradual exposure to increase tolerance for noises. Also a great way to prepare children for an upcoming school concert or first music class!





## Musical Instrument Puzzle

This beautifully designed wooden instrument puzzle has eight different instrument pieces. Hear them sound off when they are placed into their proper spots on the wooden board! Children can learn the correct musical sound of each instrument, then practice discriminating one from the other. It's an ideal way to expose children to sounds of varying tones and pitch while also working on fine motor development.



## Farm Touch & Feel Puzzle

Children will love this colorful wooden puzzle, featuring textured pieces that help stimulate tactile development. Ask children to close their eyes and feel the pieces, trying to identify the animals according to their texture and shape. Also a great tool for reviewing animal sounds and discussing where each animal lives.







## Beeposh Hope Blanket

This fleece blanket is both comfy and stylish! The material is pleasing to children bothered by rough or scratchy materials. Great for car trips or sleepovers, this cozy throw makes an ideal comfort object—soft, soothing, and easy to take along when children need a little extra confidence. Generously sized at 48 x 56 inches (122 x 142 cm), it's good for naps and more! Machine washable. *Other styles available.*

## Fashion Press

Place, layer, and fold the fabrics for wonderful sensory input . . . and a chance to design amazing fashions! Motivated by the easy-to-make, easy-to-modify designs, children will lift, scrunch, press, and manipulate 12 different fabric swatches onto the two wooden design forms. The frame hinges closed to add the finishing touch, holding the fabrics (and fashions) in place.



### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA

Use your own fabrics! Look for swatches and scraps that are velvety, crinkly, ribbed, satiny, woven—as many textures as possible—and add them to the set.





## Corduroy Cuties Dog

Thick-ribbed corduroy material gives this smiling plush toy textural dimension, making him irresistibly squeezable! Introducing children to a variety of textures at an early age helps to expand their tactile experiences. This soft plush animal is also a great transitional object for children to take along when traveling, providing them with a sense of security. (It's a good idea to have more than one "Cutie" on hand in case one gets lost or dirty!)



## Bella Butterfly Cart

This colorful cart is perfect for filling up . . . then dumping out! Load it with toys, books, or blocks, and have your little one wheel it around. Increase the challenge and keep interest high by setting up a simple obstacle course for kids to follow as they go! Pushing the full cart makes a great heavy-work activity, delivering sensory input to muscles and joints. *Also available: Happy Giddy Cart.*



*"For my daughter, manipulating heavy objects like a cart full of blocks is as calming as a tight hug!"*

-Rachel (Lulu's mom)



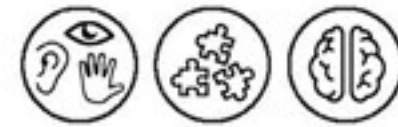
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## Fish Bowl Fill & Spi

This fill-up, dump-out, an again set delights the se The multi-textured toys r jingle, squeak, and crinkle they are shaken or sque Even the clear side p provide a unique textu touch and feel. Enco children to explore each p observing its texture, s and size. Then challenge to reach into the “bowl” identify the different p without looking!



## Maritime Mates Sink & Seek Rings

These four character pool rings are wonderful water-fun toys for both beginning and advanced swimmers! Toss the rings into the water and ask children to retrieve them: It’s great exercise, and the resistance of the water is excellent heavy work, providing lots of sensory input. Make the game more exciting by timing children and see how fast they can collect all of the rings before tossing them in for a friend!





## Seaside Sidekicks Nesting Pails

These four colorful nesting pails are great for sand- or water-play at the beach or indoors at your very own sand table. Filling and lifting these pails can be a calming activity for those who benefit from lifting heavy objects, which directly impacts muscles and joints. The unique texture of sand and the high interest of these durable buckets (featuring contrasting colors, painted numbers, molded characters, and traceable letters), may entice children to a new material that they might not be inclined to use at first. (The numbers, words, and varying colors encourage early learning skills, too!)



### SKILL-BUILDING TIPS

**Find sensory input in children's everyday world to help stimulate or regulate the senses.**

- 1** Have children cover a small table or placemat with shaving cream and allow them to trace their names. The shaving cream provides an exciting sensory activity, and making the letters in a new material reinforces letter formation using a multi-sensory approach.
- 2** For younger children, put the shaving cream in a zippered baggie with a few drops of food coloring and let them work the color into the cream. This provides a safe, neat sensory experience for younger children and also displays how colors can be combined to make new ones!
- 3** Have children help carry groceries from the car. One or two heavy cans provide a nice weighted activity that can help to regulate sensory input.





## PICKY EATERS

For parents, mealtimes are an important chance to provide kids with proper nutrition. But for kids, picking and choosing the foods they eat can feel like an opportunity to exercise independence! Kids who refuse some foods—or anything new—may feel more open-minded about trying new things when they are involved in the process. The products in this section help give kids a chance to feel as if they are the ones choosing, preparing, and creating their own nutritious meals. Just using these toys as talking points can have huge benefits: Discussing and playing with a variety of fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods can help prepare kids for a lifetime of healthy eating. Remember to celebrate small steps, such as taking one bite of a new food. (It may take a few separate tries before they like it!)



### Make-a-Meal Sticker Pad

All the food groups are represented in this creative sticker set. Let kids explore them all as you discuss what goes into a well-balanced meal, or help them “choose” meals ahead of time by placing the stickers on one of 15 paper backgrounds. Kids will become more invested and willing to try new foods if they are a part of the process of selecting nutritious treats. Once the meal is modeled on the paper placemat, take it to the kitchen to recreate it with real food items.



#### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA

Help children decorate their placemats with stickers of the new foods they have tried as a visual reminder of their progress and something to be proud of!



### Set the Table Placemat

A write-on placemat prepares hard-to-please eaters for mealtime! Children can use it as a guide to set the table, then draw in the foods they are going to eat. Remind them to represent all the food groups in their plan! (A color-in side lets kids customize place settings, too.) Take it to dinners out to keep kids occupied while waiting. *Part of the Fun Themes Learning Set. Learning Mat Crayons sold separately.*







## Grocery Store/Lemonade Stand

Children can choose to set up a store or sell lemonade with this transformable wooden play set. Plastic bins and chalkboard signs, which are included with the set, are perfect for displaying, storing, and labeling healthy fruits and vegetables (sold separately). Children can encourage customers to buy their fruits and vegetables by explaining their nutritional value to prospective buyers! As a bonus, children can practice writing and math skills as they label the bins and tally up the purchases.



## Doll High Chair

Picky eaters benefit from having a set routine at mealtime, and this beautifully crafted wooden high chair makes feeding a baby doll a mealtime ceremony to be proud of! The removable tray allows young caregivers to easily get baby in and out of the high chair independently. This type of role play can help parents establish a routine with their own children, such as preparing the food, getting in their seats, and staying there until the meal is complete (while making baby do the same!).



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## Jenna Doll

Here is a creative way to get children interested in eating: ask them to be the parent! This soft and cuddly baby is perfect for “feeding.” Real-life parents emphasize the importance of healthy eating. Parents may also ask their children to eat a particular fruit or vegetable to set a good example and “show” their baby how to eat healthily. **Also available: Natalie (blonde) and Brianna (brunette).**



## Time to Eat! Feeding Set

Young caregivers will love this feeding set for their baby dolls! Children practice feeding their babies nutritious foods, such as applesauce and peas and carrots. The bib, bottles, spoon, and “spork” make it even more realistic, and a divided dish allows parents to talk about having different food groups represented at mealtime. Parents can role-play with young children, showing them proper techniques for spoon- and bottle-feeding babies.







## Food Groups Wooden Play Set

This set of play foods in the four basic food groups is perfect for teaching children about the benefits of healthy eating. Allow children to explore the many items, and then group them into the categories of dairy, grains, produce, meats, and fish. Also great for teaching children with certain food allergies what foods they might need to stay away from. Children can manipulate the foods to create a well-balanced meal and later identify healthy choices in the grocery store or at the dinner table. A great teaching tool for children of all ages!



## Chef Puppet

Everyone knows children sometimes listen to other people better than their own parents, so let Chef Alfredo “Al” Dente help out at mealtime! This child-friendly puppet can encourage youngsters to try a new food and *mangia, mangia!* . . . or at least take a bite. Parenting picky eaters can be challenging—remember that even small steps should be considered a great success! Let the chef be a cheerleader for trying new flavors and foods. He can even give kids “expert” tips, such as dipping the new fruit or veggie in a delicious spread.







### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA

Use the working timer to make a game out of meal planning—it's a whole new way to do "fast food"!

## Cook's Corner Wooden Kitchen

This cool kitchen has room to prepare, cook, clean, and create delicious nutritious pretend meals. Allow children to play in their own kitchen while and Dad are busy cooking. Together you can decide what healthy recipe to cr Making picky eaters a part of the process will given them a sense of contro make them more willing to try new foods. **Also available: Deluxe Kitchen.**



## Let's Play House! Stainless Steel Pots & Pans

Having children pretend-play with own cook's set can be the first st getting them to try new foods. Ask ki create a menu for the day and then " it themselves. This gorgeous set is du constructed with polished stainless and riveted handles, so play-co looks and feels like the real thing! these realistic pots and pans to kid a conversation about what types of you might cook in the kitchen.





## Sushi Slicing Play Set

Taking picky eaters to restaurants can be challenging for parents. But with practice through play, kids can prepare for new food experiences and even exotic meals out! Allow children to explore sushi, chopsticks, wasabi, and more with this 24-piece play set. They will know what to expect before arriving at the restaurant, and may even know ahead of time what they would like to order! The wooden sushi rolls are stuck together with hook-and-loop tabs, so kids can use the wooden knife to chop and serve them, too. *Also available: Stir-Fry Set and Grilling Set.*



## Cutting Food Wooden Play Set

Children will love “cutting” and then reassembling these wooden food items over and over. Great for fine motor skills and discussions about healthy eating! Set includes a wooden knife and cutting board so kids can learn about knife safety and proper handling. Also allows for play cooking to more specific recipes, since kids can add just a “bit” of something. Pulling the food apart by hand provides nice resistance for strengthening fine muscles too! *Also available: Cutting Fruit.*



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## Play-Time Produce Farm Fresh Fruit

These realistically sized offer endless hours of he play! Kids can become fa with a variety of produce exploring color, size, and tes (Expand the conversation to out how and where these fruit

grown.) Exposing children to a variety of foods through play lays the groundwo incorporating them into their diets. Use the set to let children decide what new to try next, or add fun to grocery shopping: Bring one or more pieces to the stor let the child look for a match! This product is ideal for use with the Grocery S Lemonade Stand and the Deluxe Kitchen. **Also available: Farm Fresh Vegetab**



## Seaside Sidekicks Sand Pizza Set

Children will love playing with this brightly colored, durable sand-toys set. Br to the beach or use it inside at a sand table! The pizza shaped molds let kic as “chef” in a play-based setting, opening the door for constructive conversa about healthy eating. The four molds have different toppings: cheese, mushrc peppers, and pepperoni. Have children make the pizza, serve it to their custo and then try a real pizza themselves! Pizza dinners can be an easy way to wo nutritious new foods as toppings, including spinach, broccoli, and even tofu.







## Felt Food Sandwich Set

This 33-piece play set has it all! Children can choose from a variety of vegetables, meats, cheeses, and condiments to fill felt pitas, buns, and bread slices. There's plenty of variety, so kids can explore and experiment as they make sure all the food groups are represented in each treat. Kids who are hesitant to try certain sandwich items can gain familiarity and comfort through the play pieces, and may be more willing to try the real deal! This set is also great for memory—try “ordering” a sandwich and having children prepare it for a customer. Another idea is to have children create their sandwiches with the felt set and then go off to the kitchen to recreate them with real food at mealtime. *Also available: Taco & Burrito Set and Pizza Set.*



## SKILL-BUILDING TIPS

### Help kids get a taste for new experiences with these appetizing tips:

- 1 Allow children to take a “no-thank-you bite” when being introduced to a new food. This enables the children to sample the food with the assurance that they will only be asked to take one bite. Requiring one bite, when introducing a new food, can help to expand a child’s diet, since it often takes several times trying a new food to acquire a taste for it.
- 2 Have children draw a rainbow and then try to eat a fruit or vegetable for every color. The visual reminder of the rainbow helps to reinforce the idea of variety and allows for an art activity at the same time!
- 3 Show picky eaters the menu for a new restaurant before your visit. Come up with an idea of what they can order ahead of time, reducing stress and anxiety on everyone’s part. This helps to allow for a more pleasant dining experience for all!





## ORAL MOTOR SKILLS

Oral Motor skills are the physical skills necessary for eating, swallowing, facial expression, and, when paired with breath control, speech! Therapies that are designed to improve oral motor skills develop awareness, strength, and control of the muscles of the face and mouth. Happily, all of these aims can also be achieved through playtime at home. In fact, practicing these essential skills in a fun-filled, rewarding way may be the best way to motivate kids to keep trying! The play activities featured here require closed or pursed lips (such as blowing bubbles or playing musical instruments)—a great way to build skills in a way that is both playful and productive. And kids will love the rewards: music, bubbles, and pride in their new abilities!

### Bollie Ladybug Bubble Bucket

Blowing bubbles is good oral-motor practice and fun at the same time! This cheerful ladybug bubble bucket lets kids focus on blowing bubbles instead of avoiding spills. Once the solution is in, secure the lid and you are ready to have some fun! The set includes the bubble solution and three wands in different colors—helpful when working on color recognition. *Also available: Tootle Turtle Bubble Bucket.*



#### SKILL-BUILDING PLAY IDEA

Challenge children to count and catch all the bubbles they blow!



***“This helps us practice turn-taking, motor coordination, and even simple language exchanges. It’s a go-to item from my bag of toys!”***

-Katie (speech pathologist)



## Verdie Chameleon 3-in-1 Wand

This “switch” wand is perfect for bubbles on the go (and a neat trick for traveling therapists)! Blowing bubbles helps children learn breath control: They need to blow with just the right amount of force to make bubbles appear. Offer children a mirror so they can watch themselves blow the bubbles and see the proper lip position.

*Also available: Mollie Ladybug 3-in-1 Wand.*



## Froggy Mini Bubble Cup

These adorable mini bubble sets are perfect for little hands! The bubble cup has an extra-wide lip, designed to keep fingers free of drips and help prevent spills. Children dip the shaped wands through the slot in the lid (which also promotes strong fine motor skills) then purse the lips to blow through the shaped wand tips. *Also available: Bella Butterfly Mini Bubble Cup.*



## Mombo Snake Bubble Whistle

Reward every blow with bubbles and sound! Use this clever bubble maker as a whistle or as a bubble blower and whistle in one—either way, it makes for a beneficial oral motor exercise and breathing activity, and offers lots of opportunities for bubble-play fun: Encourage children to blow sounds that are loud or soft (exercising those lungs!), and short or long. Or see who can blow bubbles while making the least (or most) noise. *Also available: Bollie Ladybug Bubble Whistle.*







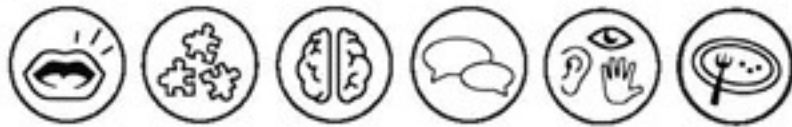
## Bella Butterfly Bubble Blower

This colorful bubble set has everything you need for an afternoon of fun: an adorable bubble solution, a matching dipping tray, and bubble solution. Children will have a ball blowing bubbles while practicing pursed lips and proper breath control. They can also try to “catch” bubbles or use a wand to make the task more challenging. *available: Verdier Chameleon Bubble Blower*



## Recorder

Children will love making music with this well-made wooden recorder! It's relatively easy to create clear sounds and simple melodies, so confidence will soar while kids explore music and improve oral motor skills. The mouthpiece design helps strengthen the lips—great for children who are graduating to a sippy cup or learning to drink from a straw. The holes are perfect for little fingers working on fine motor control, too!



## Harmonica

Children will be rewarded with beautiful music when inhaling and exhaling! When trying to increase breath control, use this terrific tool to focus attention on sound rather than strength—for the child, it can feel like a fresh challenge when you ask for “loud” and “soft” sounds rather than just “stronger.” Concentrate on lip strength when asking children to hold individual notes one at a time.



## Kazoo

Children of all ages will love humming into this wooden kazoo. They'll be improving lip strength and breath control as they play! Ask kids to vary their sounds loud, soft, long, short in a pattern to make an exciting game out of this entertaining motor exercise. The fun is doubled when playing along with a friend!







## Sprayza Magic Super Deluxe Set

Sprayza is a breath-powered tool with lots of style! Children will be delighted to make airbrushed designs while working on oral motor skills. Simply snap one of the pens into the Sprayza tool and blow: The washable ink transfers onto the page to produce stenciled art or one-of-a-kind designs! It's perfect for older children who want their oral motor support and learning tools to have a bit more "cool." *Also available: Sprayza Fashion Deluxe Set.*



## SKILL-BUILDING TIPS

### Help your kids master oral-motor milestones with these easy tricks:

- 1 Some children may have difficulty blowing out candles or blowing bubbles at first. Here's a helpful tip: Cut a piece of a plastic straw. Let the children put it in their mouth, forcing them to purse their lips before blowing out the candles. When playing with bubbles simply hold the bubble wand in front of the straw.
- 2 Having children use a straw for drinking strengthens oral motor muscles. Make the task a bit more difficult (and tasty) by thickening the liquid to a healthy smoothie or milkshake!
- 3 Playing a game of "funny faces" with your child is also a great way to strengthen the muscles of the mouth, lips, and tongue. See who can make the most dramatic funny faces over and over. (It's guaranteed to get a laugh!)





We hope this guide gave you some fresh ideas, and that the products inside bring you and your child new horizons and lots of joy. See you at playtime!

*Melissa & Doug*

