

**Family Living
Focus**

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**'Tis The Season
For Buying Toys**

It's toy-buying time again! Millions of parents, relatives, and friends will purchase millions of dollars worth of toys. In a few weeks these toys will be in the hands of the nation's young. Some of the toys won't stay in their hands for long. Others will become favorites and be used for years.

At this time of year it is interesting to ask why some toys are big hits and others seem to be big losers. There are two reasons. Part of the answer lies within the child since each child is a unique person, with his own likes, dislikes, interests and abilities.

It is very important to consider where the child is in his development and where he is likely to be in the very near future. For example one father gave his two-year-old daughter a very complicated doll. The little girl completely disregarded the doll once it was opened and held "once" on Christmas morning. A more appropriate gift might have been a stuffed doll that did not eat

and wet.

Another family decided to buy a small indoor slide for their four-year-old son. Again, the boy was not at all interested in this rather expensive gift. The reason was simple — the past summer the boy had mastered the large slide at the park. The small slide would have been just right for an 18-month-old or even a 2½-year-old, but not a 4-year-old. The idea of matching the toy or gift with the child's level of development is often overlooked because a parent may in fact buy the toy on impulse or buy it because he or she thinks the toy is cute. Any toy should offer some challenge to the child but not be so advanced that it will take many months for the child to grow into it.

Before deciding on a toy it is helpful to sit back and watch what the child does in his play. Does he like to play make-believe using people and cars? Does she enjoy doing more quiet activities? Is she ready for a simple board game? Does a wheel toy fascinate him? Is she able to throw a ball?

Can she read? Does he have books of his own? What you see your child doing should give you some hints about what kind of toys to buy.

Many catalogs and toy packages have suggested ages stated. Keep in mind that these are intended only as a guide. Each parent must choose the toy that is suited to his/her child.

Catalogs can be helpful because they are filled with ideas. Look through them and when a toy looks like a good one for your child, think about the above questions. Catalogs also give the parent a chance to make a list before hitting the store.

The other part of the original question about why some toys are big hits and others are real losers lies in the toys themselves. Any toy should be safe for the child who receives it. It is unfair and unwise to give a toy to a child that requires an adult to be present for it to be used safely. It is also unfair to give a young child a toy that requires an adult to make it work. For example, there are board games on the market that require an adult to constantly be involved in playing them so that they do not fall apart.

Look for board games intended for young children that are simple in their design. There should be few, if any, complicated parts. The child should not only be able to play the game, but also even set it up and put it away.

Any good toy is well constructed and is constructed in such a way that it will withstand

many months of hard child play.

Look for flaws in the toy. Will certain parts easily come off or break? If it is made of plastic, does it appear to be strong enough to last? Are their lots of small parts that are likely to be lost?

Be careful buying fad toys or toys that are pushed hard on television. A few of these nationally advertised toys are worthwhile, but many are not. Television can make a toy appear to do much more than it can really do. One example is the annual pitch for cars or dolls that seem to be able to do amazing stunts. TV close-ups can be deceiving.

When your child gets the "super TV" car or doll, he may be very disappointed because it won't do what he thought it would do. Another thing to consider in buying toys that are part of a TV ad is that the toy is likely to pass rather quickly. We have seen this happen in recent years with toys that capitalized on the stars of movies and television programs. These toys cost much more, too.

The business of buying toys for children is one that takes a good deal of thought and planning. Begin early and make wise selections. And by all means don't overload the child with toys. A few well-planned and thoughtfully chosen toys are far better than a grocery store basket full, many of which could end up gathering dust in the basement on January 1!

Toy Suggestions

For children under 2 years:

- sturdy rattles
- brightly colored objects
- rubber or washable squeak toys
- stuffed dolls and animals
- large, soft, colored balls
- blocks with round-

- ed corners
- push and pull toys
- Children 2 to 3 years:
- sand box with bucket, shovel and spoon
- large peg boards
- wooden animals
- cars and wagons to push
- tip-proof kiddie cars and tri-cycles
- large crayons
- low rocking horses
- small chairs and tables
- Children 3 to 4 years:
- small brooms and carpet sweepers
- toy telephones
- dolls with simple wrap-around clothing
- doll buggies and furniture
- dishes
- miniature garden tools
- trucks and tractors
- non-electric trains
- drums
- costume clothes
- building blocks

Creativity in a child begins at about age 4. To encourage creativity select toys such as the following:

- blackboards and dustless chalk
- simple construction sets
- paints and paint books
- doll houses and furniture
- small sports equipment
- skipping rope
- wash tubs and boards
- paper doll sets with blunt-end scissors
- costumes
- modeling clay
- Children 6 to 8 years:
- sleds
- roller skates
- approved electrical toys
- playground equipment
- items for playing store, bank or gas station
- puzzles and games
- Children 8 years and older:
- hobby materials
- arts and crafts
- photography
- coin and stamp collections
- puppets
- musical instruments
- gym and sports equipment
- bicycles
- science sets

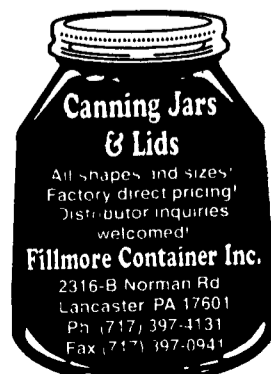
**Hershey Museum Opens
Annual Christkindlmarkt
Dec. 1-3**

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — Join the Hershey Museum in kicking off the season in true German style with Christkindlmarkt weekend, as the museum is transformed into a traditional German Christmas market.

Hours are Friday, Dec. 1, 11 a.m.- 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 2 and 3, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Museum regular admission is charged for access to all of the events and crafts.

More than 40 handcraft vendors are participating this year. All vendors at the Hershey Museum Christkindlmarkt are carefully chosen from a wide range of applicants. Saturday, Dec. 2, is Bel-snickle Day. Watch this traditional Pennsylvania German un-Santa-like Christmas character make up his list of naughty children to visit on Christmas Eve, with special performances at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

The museum is closed Christmas, and New Year's Day. Museum admission is \$6 adults, \$5.50 seniors 62+, \$3 children 3-15, children under 3 are free. For more information, call (717) 534-3439, or visit our web site at www.hershey-museum.org.



**PENNSYLVANIA CHRISTMAS
and GIFT SHOW**

17th Annual
Nov. 29 - Dec. 3, 2000 • PA FARM SHOW COMPLEX

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www.pachristmasshow.com



National Christmas Center, Paradise, PA



Encore Dance Center Troupe, Lancaster, PA

**5 Indoor Acres of Shopping & Entertainment
Plus a Special Christmas Display from
The National Christmas Center**

CHRISTMAS SHOP at the largest holiday hall in the country—over 500 specialty shoppes selling a wide array of exclusive, unique gifts for family and friends. You'll be pleased with the quality, variety and range of reasonable prices (\$2 to \$700). Gifts for sale include: arts & crafts, jewelry, clothing, Christmas ornaments, toys, household accents, ceramics, furniture, dolls, flowers, paintings and much, much more.

YOU'LL BE ENTERTAINED during your shopping experience. Take a 30-minute break to enjoy a professional ice show. On Saturday and Sunday, you'll see our performing dance troupe. Or, enjoy listening to our choral and musical groups. See a 110-foot train display, 40 decorated trees, and holiday displays. Plus cooking clinics and Olde Christmas Village with its 19 life-size buildings and quaint tents.

GETTING HUNGRY from all this activity? There is a 600-seat cafeteria serving hot meals all day, and you'll find 8 concession areas to serve you.

ONE ADMISSION PRICE COVERS ALL EVENTS. The entire show is inside and under one roof, and there is **FREE PARKING** in our 5,000-car parking lot.

Opens Wed., Nov. 29, 2000 at:

**Pa. Farm Show Complex
2301 North Cameron Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
(2 Blocks South of Exit 23 on I-81)
Telephone: 717-233-5100**

DATES:
Wednesday, November 29 to
Sunday, December 3, 2000

SHOW HOURS:
10 am to 9 pm - Wednesday,
Thursday & Friday
9 am to 9 pm - Saturday
10 am to 6 pm - Sunday

ADMISSION:
\$6.00 General Admission
\$4.00 Senior Citizens (over 62)
\$3.00 After 5 pm for Everyone (no discounts after 5 pm)
(children under 12 FREE with parent)

