



Holiday Toy Guide and Useful Tips



2015



In the following pages I highlight some toys that have been big hits in my home. These are just ideas for toys that you might consider adding to your toy collection. Many of the toys are of high quality and thus pricey which may or may not be a factor in your selection process. Whenever possible I have offered some less expensive alternatives. In many {not all} cases when I have settled for a toy of lower quality, I have regretted the purchase later. For example, we started out with a set of large blocks that were reasonably priced in lieu of the more pricey Community Playthings blocks and although we got many years of use out of them, I look back and wish I had invested that money into 2 or 3 of the higher quality blocks. Depending on your circumstances, this may not be a possibility but I just wanted to throw that out there.

Before you take a look at the toys, I want to discuss one thing that has been extremely helpful for our family and that is to DECLUTTER your existing toys FIRST before bringing new toys into your home for the holidays. I know things can get busy and overwhelming at this time of year but if you put in a little effort now you will be appreciative after the holidays are over.

SIMPLIFY YOUR CHILDREN'S TOYS

Toys are very cherished belongings in our households but often hinder our child's ability to play freely. They also create clutter and can be dangerous when left out around the house. I have stepped on a toy and almost seriously injured myself more times than I would like to admit. And if you have children of mixed ages you may have had experiences where you frantically picked up a smaller piece of a toy off the floor before your young one puts it in his or her mouth.

Before you actually begin to clean up the toys take a minute to reflect inside your playroom or the room that houses the most toys (i.e. living room, den). Does it feel chaotic and engulfing? Do you feel claustrophobic when you look at the vast number of toys in the space? Are you overwhelmed with choices? If you spent more than five minutes in that room would *you* be able to function clearly and with ease?

When I began my toy decluttering process I was amazed at how many toys we had actually acquired. I was always very conscious about not having too many toys but when I gathered all the toys into our playroom I was overwhelmed with the sheer amount. It served as a wake-up call and made me realize that we were practically being eaten alive by the toys in our house. I could not help but wonder how they had all crept into our house without me noticing.

Ironically too many choices can be detrimental to a young child's well-being and often have the opposite effect of requiring more of our time. When children are faced with too many choices they may feel overwhelmed. They can act out or become withdrawn. They may have a harder time settling down. They may become more needy and call out to us for help.

On the other hand, when children have just a few quality toys they can live deeply within their play. The object that they have can become many different things depending on their mood. They can explore their toys more deeply. They can feel a sense of peace as they look around and see a manageable amount of choices that can become part of their new creation. They are more free to play independently and tend to call on us less often.

Unfortunately most playrooms look like a semi-organized garbage dump. There are piles of toys in corners and all over the floor. If there are baskets for “organization” these are usually filled to the brim with toys, puzzles, and games, half of which are broken or missing pieces. Does this sound familiar?

Couple this with the extra toys that you receive over the holidays and you end up with an overwhelming amount of toys with no room to breathe. So what I have done each year before the holidays begin is to set aside one day over the weekend to sort through all our existing toys. This is the process I have used and have found to be effective:

THE TOY DECLUTTERING PROCESS

Instead of starting in the playroom and cleaning all the toys there and then moving to the living room and decluttering all the toys there, my process works like this. You will gather all of the toys from *every* room in the house and put them all together in one place. This serves the purpose of giving you a clear idea of how many toys you actually have. It is harder to realize the extent of how much you actually have until you see it all in front of you. And toys tend to be one category of belongings in which you have accumulated far more than you realize.

In order to get a handle on the number of toys in our house I came up with the following process:

1. **Get three large bins and one large contractor trash bag** (or laundry baskets if you prefer). You may need more than three depending on how many toys you have but this is a good place to start. Begin walking around the playroom and putting the toys into one of the bins/baskets based on the following criteria:
 1. **If it is a toy your child LOVES then it goes in the KEEP bin** {unless it has broken or missing pieces in which case it goes in a second bin designated for BROKEN toys}.
 2. **Any toys which are broken go in a BROKEN bin.** If a toy is broken beyond repair or has missing pieces then you can immediately discard it in a large contractor trash bag.
 - 3.
 4. **If there is a toy that your child does not play with or if it is a toy that you absolutely cannot stand then it goes in the DONATE bin.**

As you go along in this process you may find you need more than just three bins to fit all of the toys. If necessary duplicate your bins (i.e. two for DONATE, two for KEEP, etc.). Finish this process until you have accounted for EVERY SINGLE toy in your house.

Once every toy is accounted for revisit your BROKEN bin. Look at the toys and decide if the toys in the bin are ones you will actually fix and if so, decide if you will fix the toys within the next week. If not, discard the toy in the trash bag. It is important to keep the momentum going and if there is any doubt it is better to eliminate the toy than to keep it. Whatever toys still remain in this BROKEN bin must be fixed within the one week timeline or they too should be discarded. It is important to have a deadline to this step as toys can easily sit in a BROKEN bin for years (trust me, it has happened to me).

Now turn to the DONATE bin. Do NOT go back through this bin. Your first instinct is usually correct and you should know that if it did not speak to you when you were going through the sorting process then there is no reason to revisit it now. Immediately cover the bin and put it in a place where your children will not see it. You will keep these toys for no more than one month at which time you will donate them to the good will. If over this next month your child suddenly remembers a toy which is missing and insists on playing with it then you can dig it out of the DONATE bin that you have hidden away. However, NEVER EVER let your children see the contents of this bin or where you have hidden it or those toys will end right back up in your playroom! I cannot tell you how many times my children have gone through a DONATION bag before I could give it away and found old toys that they immediately began playing with which mysteriously ended up back in the playroom.

Next revisit the KEEP bin. Take a look at the contents of this bin and really make sure that the toys in there are ones that bring your child joy. If there are any which are questionable put them in the DONATE bin. The remaining toys should be ones that you and your child absolutely love.

Now that you have dwindled down your toy collection you can begin to put the toys back in the playroom. However, if you find as you are putting these toys back in their place that you are starting to feel overwhelmed with the amount of toys in the room then only put some back. Remember the idea is to have a space that feels breathable. If things begin to feel overwhelming then you have too many toys.

The remaining KEEP toys that do not fit in the space will stay in the KEEP bin. These, too, will be hidden out of sight and will be used as a TOY LIBRARY for the future. A toy library is a way of rotating through quality toys that bring joy to your child. In one month you can bring out the KEEP bin and exchange one toy from the bin for one toy in the playroom. You can do this until the entire bin is emptied or just pick one or a few toys at a time. You can experiment with both ways and see which has the biggest effect. The key again is to make sure that you are swapping toys, not adding extra toys. The KEEP bin should still be filled with toys that will continue to be your toy library in the future.



Toys



❄️ Kitchen Play ❄️

palumba.com - Simple Hearth Wooden Kitchen
{beautiful cherrywood and is deep enough to fit in
play muffin tins/pans} \$350



Sylvie's Kitchen \$259



palumba.com has the cutest kitchen accessories:



Ikea vegetable set - \$7.99



amazon.com
Plan Toys Tableware Accessory Set \$17.96
and Plan Toys Tea Set \$18.74



❄️ Dolls & Dollhouse Play ❄️



palumba.com - Beautiful cherrywood dollhouse
\$210
24 " L x14" W x22" H



Seri's Dollhouse by Elves and Angels - made of Pine 27"H x 30"W x 12"D ~\$230
bellalunatoys.com or novanatural.com

Heavy Baby Dolls
{the original ones come from

DreamPixie but they no longer sell them directly} - We have three of these and the boys still play with them. These are about 4.5 pounds. Comes in different colors and skin tones.



www.bellalunatoys.com - \$170 {these sell out fast}



Healing Heart Weighted Baby by Mimi's Designs in her [etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com) shop - weigh about 4 pounds and also come in different colors and skin tone - \$145



Ikea doll bed \$19.99

Palumba Doll High Chair \$65



Nova Natural Doll Stroller \$59



❄️ Block Play ❄️

communityplaythings.com has the best blocks by far. These are the ones they use in the pre-school classrooms at our school. They are expensive but well worth the price. They hold up well to hefty play and are solid. Large blocks are \$50 each, Ramps are \$120 for 2 ramps, Half blocks are \$71 for 2 blocks.



But if you are looking for an alternative starter kit then consider these blocks on the left - we started out with these and although I still recommend investing the money in the community playthings blocks, these other ones were good when the boys were little. They are not as durable though.

For little blocks, this [Melissa and Doug set](#) is good and reasonably priced. I actually found this at Home Goods many years ago for a discounted price - on amazon currently for \$55





[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00006H000) - [Melissa and Doug Wooden Project Workbench](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00006H000) \$74.76 - My kids loved this bench. It is not the best quality {our vice broke off within days} but offers a lot of opportunity to hammer and screw.

[communityplaythings.com](https://www.communityplaythings.com) - [Rocking Boat/Stairs](https://www.communityplaythings.com) \$290
High quality rocking boat/stairs that will last forever.



If you need a less expensive alternative, here are two others. We have the Steffy below and it has held up even with 4 boys. Not as heavy but still very sturdy.

[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00006H000) - [Jonti Craft Pre-school 2-in-1 Rocking Boat](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00006H000) \$193 {on left} or [Steffy Wood Rocky Boat and Stairs](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00006H000) \$198 {below}



❄️ Ride On Toys ❄️

communityplaythings.com - Kiddie Car (ages 2-4) \$126 {free shipping}

My 7 year old still rides on this even though it is way too small for him! These are durable and maneuver well around the house.

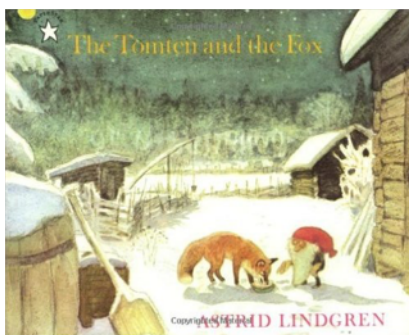
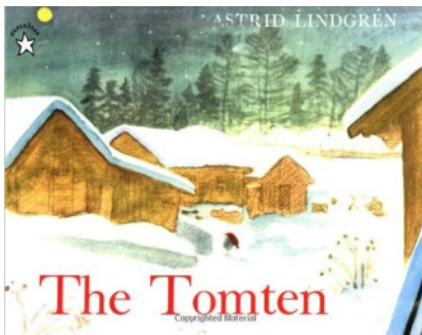
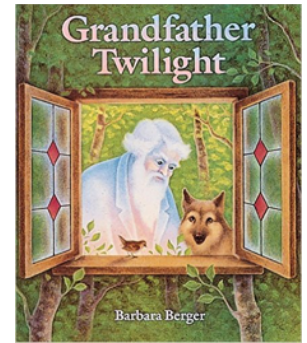
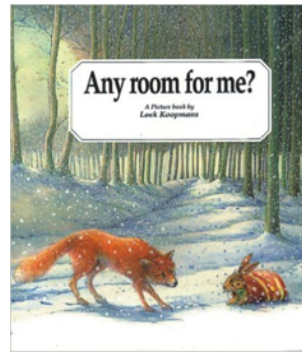
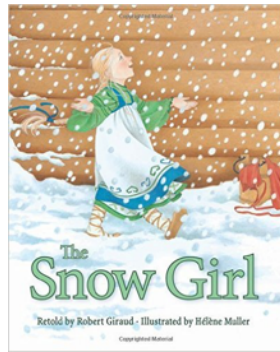


amazon.com - Smart Gear Wooden Balance Bicycle - \$69.99-\$79.99 - If you want to avoid training wheels then this is the way to go. Once your children master how to balance on this they will learn how to ride a pedal bicycle within minutes! We ride ours in the house but they are meant for the outdoors. Helmets are always a good choice to go with these! There are many different brands of wooden balance bikes. Just do a search for “wooden balance bicycle” and you’ll find some options.



❄️ Books ❄️

You can do a search for any of these on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or check the Magic Closet to see what they have in stock. Here are a few of our Winter favorites:



Not related to books but we love this Wooden Table with storage crates from Palumba. It is the perfect height for a doll house or farm - \$210

❄️ Miscellaneous ❄️



Cascade Tower - \$52



Nurmi the Ramp Walker - \$33



Large Rainbow Stacker - \$81

Community Playthings Large Trucks - \$114-\$148 each



Ikea Easel - \$15



Wooden Wagon Birthday Ring - \$47



Speedway Track - \$84.50



Tegu Magnetic Blocks - \$125





Silk Streamer - \$12

Rainbow Garland - ~\$13



Felted Wall Hangings from Mimi Hirsch
- \$175 {she does custom orders at all different price points}



Palumba Table Top Play Kitchen - \$99



Palumba Play Stands in Cherry - \$379
You can find play stands at many different price points so shop around. This one is absolutely gorgeous in person, however.

Ostheimer Figures - I have found them to be the least expensive at The Wooden Wagon.

Play Silks A Toy Garden Set of 12 - \$120
Many people opt for Sarah's Silks but I have found these silks from A Toy Garden are extra durable and a little thicker than Sarah's Silks.



❄️ Outdoor Play ❄️



Radio Flyer Classic Wagon - \$87



Radio Flyer Wheelbarrow - \$39



Twizzler, Twizzler II, or Twist-Whiz {goes by many names} - hang on a tree in your yard. Same as the one they have in the yard at school. Lots of outdoor fun. [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or do a search for it on google.



Green Toys buckets are perfect for outdoor digging

Recommended Websites

WEBSITES:

Palumba {they make the Camden Rose toys you may have seen in the Magic Closet} - this is my go-to store for high quality wooden toys. Their cherry wood is gorgeous.

Bella Luna Toys - a former Waldorf teacher, Sarah Baldwin, owns this and she has a wonderful blog where she often demonstrates craft activities.

The Wooden Wagon - great prices on many wooden toys including Ostheimer figures, nesting toys, games, birthday rings and a great selection of cars and trucks.

Nova Natural - I tend to find toys on other websites at better prices so definitely shop around.

A Toy Garden - Lots of handmade in the USA toys. The website is not the most user friendly but they have a great selection of unique toys.

Community Playthings - Great quality toys and structures that will last forever. Free shipping.

etsy.com - great handmade and wooden toys. Here are some of our favorite etsy shops:

- Mimi's Designs - handmade dolls, wool felted hangings, holiday decor
- Toy Boat Works - great wooden toy boats
- A Summer Afternoon - mix of wooden helicopters, trucks, tools, etc.
- Wisconsin Wood Chuck - mix of wooden vehicles and toys
- Arks and Animals - wooden animals, push and pull toys, etc.

Wooden Toy - this is a woodworker based in Wisconsin who makes the most beautiful trains and large items like walkers, ride-on airplanes, cranes, rocking horses etc. He even has a train-of-the-month club where you can receive one train every month in the mail. Beautiful quality but pricey.

Amazon - has great prices on wooden stacking toys, Plan Toys, and Sarah's Silks so always check here first.

Wayfair - we got our wooden refrigerator and pantry from here with free shipping so worth a look for items.

STORES:

The Magic Closet {our school store located to the right of the lobby} - check here first for your gifts in order to support our school.

Home Goods - around this time of year they start to stock up on toys. I have found wooden blocks, puzzles, Bolga baskets and other Waldorf appropriate toys here at a discounted price.

Ikea - they carry fruit/vegetables, wooden train tracks, play kitchen supplies, miscellaneous wooden toys, doll beds, etc.

❄️ Amazon Wish List ❄️

In my opinion, I have found that creating an Amazon Wish List helps for when family members ask what you would like for your children for gifts. I have a running list going that I continually add toys to as I come across things I think the kids would like.

The good thing about an Amazon Wish List is that you can download an [Add To Wishlist button](#) so that you can pin things off ANY website and put them right onto your amazon wish list. That way you are not just restricted to items sold only by amazon.

Through the years, as family members have asked me what we would like as gifts, I have sent them my wishlist. Sometimes they look at it and buy directly from it and sometimes they buy their own thing but I have found that by showing them the types of things you like they are more likely to purchase things that are in line with what you want. Sometimes this amounts to a large number of Melissa and Doug items since those are readily available in Toys r Us but at least they are better options than random light-up or battery-operated toys. I will also add pajamas and other clothes items that may be easier for family members to purchase.

When deciding on what to get for your own children, here is a “rule of 4” that might be helpful in knowing what and how much to get:

- 1 Something they WANT
- 2 Something they NEED
- 3 Something to WEAR
- 4 Something to READ

Hope you found
this guide helpful!

Best wishes for a happy and
simple holiday season.