

Ask an Expert – Tech Toys for Christmas?

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Each holiday season brings new fancy games and technology gadgets targeted to children. Whether it is the latest cell phone model, the newest gaming system, or educational games for your toddler, it can be hard to make an informed decision. If you are wondering about purchasing a tech toy this season, here are some things to consider.

For younger children:

1. Is this toy going to help my child developmentally? Flashing lights and multiple sounds and buttons might make it entertaining for your child, but research tells us that when choosing a toy for younger children, it is important to assess how the toy will be used and if it will support development. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends choosing toys that are not over-stimulating and that promote imagination and problem solving.
2. Is this toy versatile? Children grow quickly, and just like they outgrow clothes, they also outgrow toys. It is important that you look for a toy that is long-lasting, versatile, and will keep children engaged at many different ages. One guideline the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests is choosing a toy that can grow along with your child and understanding that simple toys can be just as useful and fun as toys with all the bells and whistles.

For older children:

1. Are my children ready to handle the technology I am giving them? Do they have the skills to navigate it safely? Especially when giving internet-enabled gifts, it is important to make sure your children know how to appropriately behave in an internet setting. To help them learn to be safe online and navigate technology appropriately, visit commonsensemedia.org.
2. Does my child need the newest technology version? Even though the latest version of the iPhone is on his or her list, it may be a better idea to buy an older version or a used phone. With the cost of such a gift comes responsibility, and it is easy to forget that we are placing thousands of dollars of technology into the hands of children for everyday use.

With all the things to consider when purchasing a tech toy for Christmas, one of the most helpful suggestions, according to research, is that parents ask themselves if the toy fosters positive interactions with others, encourages exploration and problem-solving, and sparks the child's imagination.

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