

Listening and Spoken Language Guide for Buying Toys for Children with Hearing Loss

5 Questions to Assist with Toy Buying

1. Does this toy make my child do the work?

Battery operated toys can be very engaging, but do not require much for the child to interact with them. Additionally, these toys tend to make a lot of noise. We want to choose toys that allow for many language opportunities with minimal background noise. Select toys that require your child to do the work!

2. Are there many different ways to play with this toy?

Select toys that encourage multiple ways to play. One of the fun things about playing with toys is that there is not one way to play. Toys that encourage play in different ways expand a child's imagination. These toys allow for increased engagement over longer periods of time.

3. Is there a lot for me to say when I play with this toy?

Think about vocabulary exposure when selecting toys. Expressive vocabulary is one of the biggest predictors of academic success. Research has reported that children with hearing loss need more exposure to learn new vocabulary. Selecting toys that allow for direct instruction with multiple opportunities to use the new words is key.

4. Does this toy encourage development in other areas, like fine and gross motor?

Choose toys that encourage overall development. Select toys that encourage fine motor, gross motor, sensory, and language development.

5. Are books considered toys?

Books are toys too! Books provide opportunities for all of the above as well as teaching emergent literacy skills. Look for books that have interactive components such as flaps or touch and feel pages. Board books are great for little ones as the story is the same, but the pages are less likely to get ruined.

BONUS TIP: Pick toys that your child is interested in. They should want to play with it and be intrinsically motivated by their own interest in the toy. Children pay attention to what they are interested in.

Top 10 Toy Recommendations

1. Little Elephant Listens by Michael Dahl
2. Learning Resources Counting Surprise Party
3. “First Words” by Make Believe Ideas
4. Green Toys House Playset
5. Velcro Play Food
6. Ball (my favorite are the medium size ones that bounce)
7. Rainbow Caterpillar Gear Toy by Melissa & Doug
8. Hand or Finger Puppets
9. Forest Friends Treehouse by Lakeshore
10. Create a Scene - Magnetic Playset by PlayMonster