



Selecting Toys

- There are so many toys and games available for play. For children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), it is always important to consider safety first. Many children with ASD may put toys in their mouths, throw, bang, or break them. Consider all physical aspects of the toys before letting a child play with them.
- Look for toys that appeal to the child's senses. Sensory fun can include play with water, beans, rice, clay, sand, or bubbles. There are also books and puzzles with various textures. Initially, touching these items can be uncomfortable for children with ASD. But soon, children can become accustomed to touch and feel of these items and begin to have fun.
- When buying or using commercial toys and games, consider the developmental age of the child, not the actual age range indicated on the package. Less complicated toys may be appropriate for lower functioning children, while toys that provide opportunities for building, discovery, creativity, and social interaction may be enjoyed by higher functioning boys and girls.
- When engaging in play with a children with ASD, it can be helpful to have only a few toys in sight. Too many toys can be overwhelming and distracting for a positive play experience.
- Toys can be a great way to build social skills. Boards games, interactive video games, card games, and sports activities are great ways to engage social interaction. Game rules may need to be simplified in order for the children to enjoy interacting with each other instead of thinking about complex instructions. It may take several times to practice before a child with ASD enjoys a game or activity.
- Some children with ASD prefer physical play while others are more comfortable with less active leisure activities. It is beneficial for the child to be exposed to both types of activities so that he or she has opportunities to experience a full range of play activities.
- Toys can be played with in different ways than initially intended. A child with ASD may enjoy playing with a toy in a different way or play a game with rules of his or her own. Toys, games, and activities can be fun for all, without following official instructions, provided the play is safe.
- Teachers, therapists, and other parents can provide suggestions based on their play experiences with children with ASD. Ask for recommendations based on a child's individual interests and challenges.

