



Safety First in Choosing Great Gifts

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MADISON – Picking the perfect gift for the little ones on your holiday list is never as simple as pulling the first toy off the shelf that catches your eye. You end up weighing many factors, like whether or not a toy is in line with the child’s interests, if the toy is interactive, if it is cute, and so on. While you make a number of considerations in this decision, what may be lost in the shuffle is the most important factor of all: whether or not a toy is safe for the child and other young ones in the home.

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection asks toy shoppers to think about the safety of each potential gift before hitting the register this holiday season.

“Make a habit of checking the safety labels on toy packaging and use that information to determine whether the product is appropriate for the home,” said Michelle Reinen, Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection. “Any warnings given about the inclusion of small parts, magnets, chemicals or other risks should be taken into consideration.”

The safety of a product is not necessarily dictated by its popularity, the brand’s reputation, or the businesses that sell the item. This October, for example, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recalled around [3.6 million childrens’ plates and bowls](#) that were made by a major manufacturer and sold at “big box” retailers nationwide. The thin plastic layer on the surface of the items was found to bubble, peel and detach, creating a choking hazard.

When shopping for toys, look for these labels on packaging or associated warnings on product webpages:

- General warning labels listing small parts, magnets, suffocation hazards, etc.
- Age grading: use the manufacturer’s suggested age range as a foundation for whether a toy is appropriate for the physical development of a child.
- All toys: “ASTM F963” – this label indicates that a toy meets the latest toy safety standards. All toys sold in the U.S. must meet this standard. ASTM F963 includes guidelines and test methods to prevent injuries from choking, sharp edges and other potential hazards.
- Art materials: “ASTM D4236” – this label indicates that art materials have been reviewed by a toxicologist and are labeled with cautionary information, if necessary.
- Toys with fabrics: “Flame resistant” – this label means that a material will resist burning and should extinguish quickly once removed from an ignition source.

Some additional things to think about when shopping for gifts for children:

- Pick up any safety items that go along with a toy such as a helmet for a bike or scooter.
- For homes with younger children, avoid toys with small parts, magnets, cords or strings.
- Choose gifts that are both age and skill appropriate for the child.
- Check for recalled toys at the CPSC website: www.CPSC.gov.
- Watch out for “button batteries,” coin-sized (or smaller) batteries that are used in some toys, remote controls, flashlights, hearing aids and more. Never let a child play with these batteries as they pose a choking hazard and can cause serious internal chemical burns in as little as two hours. Make sure that any toys that use these batteries have a screw to secure the battery compartment.

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- Watch out for gifts containing high-powered magnets. These small “rare earth” magnets can easily be swallowed by children and can attract one another in the intestinal tract, requiring surgical removal.
- Avoid no-name products. A manufacturer’s name and address is not a guarantee of safety, but it means you can track down a legitimate company to remedy problems.
- Look for hidden dangers such as sharp points, loud noises or projectiles.
- If you are purchasing wooden toys, look for splinters or sharp edges.
- If you are purchasing used toys, skip ones with chipped paint in order to avoid possible exposure to lead.

Safety concerns don’t end at the register. Be mindful of younger children and keep small or pointed toys and accessories out of their reach. Make sure to read any battery charging instructions that come with toys as chargers and adapters can overheat and pose burn hazards to young children**. Continue to keep an eye on the CPSC website for new recalls and consider signing up for DATCP’s [Keep Your Kids Safe e-newsletter](#) in order to receive a monthly summary of the children’s products recalled by the CPSC.

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wisconsin.gov, call the Consumer Protection Hotline at 800-422-7128 or send an e-mail to datcphotline@wisconsin.gov.

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***Example: the [CPSC recalled more than a half million “hoverboards”](#) (self-balancing scooters) for fire risks in 2016, a product that was at the top of many kids’ holiday gift lists in 2015.*