

# Center on Media and Child Health

Gift Guide 2013



10 Years of Science Behind Raising Media-Smart Kids

When choosing gifts, put the **CHILD** first:

## Customize

Homework

Imagination

Learning

Donate



### Customize Your Gifts!

Customize the gift based on what makes the child truly happy, and match your present to his or her specific interests, abilities, or hobbies instead of jumping on the current toy trend. Consider the child's developmental stage and individual lifestyle as well. Does he or she need more active or restful time in their life? More private or social time?

### Gift Ideas for Younger Children

- **Alone time coupon:** Make a redeemable coupon for an afternoon alone with a family member
- **Coloring book:** Include pictures that relate to their unique interests
- **Custom t-shirt:** Feature the child's artwork, or a photo of a favorite place or pet
- **Scrapbook:** Feature masterpieces in the kitchen or other creations
- **Relaxing place:** Designate a spot all their own with a fuzzy beanbag chair, pillows and light
- **Themed kit:** One that builds on the child's interests (for example, if a child loves being in the kitchen with you, make a restaurant kit with menus, an apron, a pad of paper for taking orders, sample credit cards you get in the mail, a chalk board for writing the day's specials, poster board for the restaurant's sign, etc.)

### Gift Ideas for Older Children & Teens

- **Collections:** Start, or add to, a collection
- **Tickets to an event:** Wrap them in an oversized box
- **For the new driver:** Keychain, gas card, wallet (with cash included), or sunglasses
- **Photo album or book:** Commemorating a special event
- **Custom t-shirt, blanket or poster:** Feature their favorite saying, doodle, interest, or place
- **Running shoes, ice-skates, hiking boots:** Accessories that support the child's budding interests
- **Games and puzzles:** To help kids relax and reduce stress while joyfully passing the time



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### **Do Your Homework!**

**Do your homework to make sure the gift matches the child's personality and interests. When purchasing toys, learn a little bit about them first. Making sure that the toy is a good fit for the child is an important part of gift-giving, and is easier than it may seem.**

## **Ideas for Parents**

- **Read:** Child-focused reviews of movies, games, books, toys, and mobile apps
- **Learn:** Understand the product labels with age appropriate guidelines and physical safety warnings as children under age 5 are at greatest risk for choking. Avoid chemistry and hobby sets for children under 12 since they may contain dangerous chemicals or toxic glue
- **Observe:** Consider what habits are instilled, what skills are practiced, and what lessons are learned as the child plays with the game or toy
- **Ask for help:** When you're in the store, ask for a demonstration or more information
- **Ask a Librarian:** Librarians can offer guidance on books and even movies. The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) has an annual list of Notable Children's Books available [here](#), and many public librarians can provide readers' advisory services to help you select books based on other books your child has enjoyed.

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### **Imagination!**

Stimulate their imagination with gifts they can use creatively. Gifts that leave room for open-ended, child-directed play allow the child to experiment, learn through trial and error, and discover original solutions. Child-directed toys tend to have a long shelf life, successfully holding the child's interest as it results in a different outcome every time it is used.



### **Gift Ideas for Younger Children**

- **Puppet theater**
- **Building blocks**
- **Crayons and construction paper**
- **Window sill garden supplies**
- **Hot chocolate stand**
- **Doll, action figure or stuffed animal**
- **Dress-up bin**
- **Camping gear for an indoor camp out**

### **Gift Ideas for Older Children & Teens**

- **Adopt an animal at the zoo**
- **Journal or diary**
- **Host their friends for a group adventure**
- **High-quality art supplies or crafting materials**
- **Music, dance, or art lessons**
- **Musical instruments**
- **Model-making or building supplies**
- **Cooking lesson with family or friends**
- **Lawn games (bocce ball, corn hole, bag toss, horseshoes, volleyball, etc.)**



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## **Learning!**

Encourage learning with gifts that offer them joyful ways to explore their world and build new skills. Think about what you would like them to learn, and choose gifts that support the skills they are building.

## **Gift Ideas for Younger Children**

- **Art and craft supplies** to teach color recognition, visual perception, eye-hand coordination, and planning
- **Board & card games** to help children practice taking turns, recognizing numbers, letters, and shapes, matching, sorting, counting, and building memory, focus, and dexterity
- **Science & nature toys** (like binoculars, a butterfly net, gardening supplies, camping gear) to cultivate interest in the natural world
- **Building blocks** to promote early math, spatial, visual, and planning skills, while fostering patience and perseverance

## **Gift Ideas for Older Children & Teens**

- **Board & card games** to practice quick thinking, strategy, listening, verbal communication, and rule following
- **Puzzle games** to teach patience and help exercise their attention span
- **Group lessons** to build particular interests, talents, and social skills
- **Bicycle** to encourage outdoor exploration and physical activity
- **Sports equipment** to encourage teamwork and tenacity and promote fitness
- **Family trips** if even just for a day, to open up new worlds and ideas
- **Science kits & nature tools** (e.g., night vision binoculars, camping gear) to nurture interest in the natural world
- **Cooking supplies/party** to teach spatial relationships, planning, and math and to promote connections with family and friends

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## **Donate!**

**Teach about giving by helping your child make a donation. This holiday season, involve children in giving to others.**

## **Ideas for All Children & Teens**

- **Share** what they have. Help them choose toys and books to donate to children in need.
- **Donate** to a charity. Let them to choose a charity to support with money from a job they may have and from gifts they may receive. Some organizations, like [Heifer International](#), [Habitat for Humanity](#), and [UNICEF](#), offer families the chance to get a little gift for the child (like a card with a picture of the animal that will be given to a family in need) or outings and learning opportunities to make the experience more memorable and meaningful.
- **Give time.** Have your family volunteer time together at a soup kitchen serving holiday meals.



# Media Shopping Guide 2013

## Choosing the Right Gift

This holiday season, the children in your life are probably asking for media like e-readers, tablets, MP3 players, video games, mobile phones, and DVDs. How do you choose? Consider pairing media gifts with low-tech or no-tech gifts that deepen their interest or engagement with a topic. For example, if you give her a movie about soccer, include in a soccer ball as well!

### Media Gifts & Wellness

Because repetitive, daily behavior affects a child's health and development, it is important to consider the impact of leisure activities. Media and non-media toys and games can impact how a child eats, sleeps, moves, thinks, connects, and creates. Choose gifts that support the development of good habits in all of these categories.

### How is my Child Making Their Wishlist?

Research studies in the [United Kingdom](#) and [Australia](#) reveal how advertising can influence a child or teen's gift requests.

### Media Gifts & Fit

Read child-focused [reviews](#) of games, books, movies and toys. Also, ask yourself if the item is safe, [age-appropriate](#), long-lasting (consider both durability and the ability to hold the child's interest), enjoyable, and affordable? Does it contribute to the child's educational, social and physical development?



## Video Games

**Consider:** what they are teaching. Educational games can be positive learning tools, whereas violent video games can increase aggression and fear, and decrease sensitivity to human suffering.  
**Choose:** games based on reviews, recommendations, and personal experience. Before you buy, ask trusted friends who know the game if they feel that it is suitable for your child, read reviews, and watch the game's trailer online. When you're in a store ask for a demo before you decide.  
**Set limits:** on the amount of time they spent playing.



## Movies

**Consider:** what they are teaching. Remember, children learn and are changed by what they watch. Kids who see celebrities [smoking](#) are more likely to smoke themselves, while kids who see characters overcoming their differences in order to solve a problem are more likely to accept others.  
**Choose:** movies based on a combination of you own experiences [MPAA ratings](#), reviews, and most importantly, your child's personality.  
**Set limits:** on the amount of time they spend watching movies. The holidays can be a tempting time for binge viewing (watching video content for long periods of time), so set expectations upfront, and make movie time an event, rather than an ongoing activity.



## Cell Phones

**Consider:** why your child wants or needs a cell phone.  
**Choose:** a phone if it's necessary for your child to have one, and make sure that whatever phone you choose is appropriate for your child's needs. If he or she only needs the phone to contact you, consider getting one that doesn't include lots of additional features.  
**Set limits:** on what your child can access through their phone, and choose a voice and data plan that fits their needs.



## Music

**Consider:** content. Stereotyped portrayals of gender and race can give kids stereotyped views of themselves and others, while music that contains messages that resonate with how your child is feeling can help positively manage her mood.

**Choose:** music that you and your kids can enjoy together and that offers positive messages. Read [parent reviews](#), or review the lyrics yourself by searching for the lyrics online.

**Set limits:** be sure to set aside 'quiet' time when all music is off and other activities (or even quiet contemplation) can be enjoyed.



## Tablets and Computers

**Consider:** what these media do well and don't do well, and how your child will be using them. Also consider making the device a family gift, rather than an individual gift. You'll inspire more co-viewing and collaboration while limiting the likelihood of use. Give your child access to email, photos, and approved applications, but limit additional unsupervised internet access until he or she has the judgment and communication skills to use them.

**Choose:** the device that works best for your child by having her test it before you buy. Look for opportunities for your child to create, not just consume. Many games, applications, and websites provide opportunities for kids to write, draw, design, and film.

**Set limits:** on the amount of time they use the computer or tablet. Give internet access to kids who have the maturity, knowledge, and skills to use it responsibly.



## Books, E-Books, and E-Readers

**Consider:** content. Storylines in a book may be more palatable for children than a movie about the same topic, because they are limited by their own imaginations and can only imagine what their brains are ready to envision. There are still books that kids are not developmentally prepared to read, either because of their current reading level, or because of their social maturity.

**Choose:** the medium that works best for your child and her or his needs. Many libraries offer traditional books, e-books, and even audio books. When considering an e-book reader, if your child doesn't use apps or the internet, a basic e-reader without Internet capabilities may be suitable.

**Set Limits:** on how much Internet access the device has, how it will be used, and what applications will be allowed. Remember that if your child is using the e-reader for playing games, surfing the web and/or watching TV, to limit the amount of time they use the device for these features based on their regular screen time limits.

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