

# Pointers for Parents

## Great Ways To Give Gifts That Do Good

(NAPS)—Some of the best gifts you can give a child are the ones that give back. That's the word from a growing number of parents who say toys that help support a cause are among their top present picks this season—and they've got plenty of options to choose from.

For instance, one unique Web site lets parents help children with disabilities as they shop for fun and educational toys tailored to their own child's stage of development.

The site—which offers toys for kids with and without special needs—reviews toys from the marketplace and evaluates them based on their relevance and benefits to children. Called [www.AblePlay.org](http://www.AblePlay.org), it lets shoppers search for toys by either disability category, the potential benefit they may offer, a child's age, or manufacturer. Site visitors can also make a donation to support the National Lekotek Center, a division of Anixter Center. The nonprofit group provides family-centered, play-based services for children with disabilities.

So how can you choose the best toys for your child's age and abilities? The site's experts suggest asking yourself the following questions:

**1.** Does this toy promote inclusion? Can my child enjoy it by himself or does the toy allow others to play along with him? Can the whole family play together? Will it offer siblings and friends opportunities to share the experience and increase social learning opportunities?



**The right children's presents let gift givers do good by shopping.**

**2.** Can this toy be easily adapted to my child's abilities? Sometimes, toys are hard for children to use, yet they offer potential for fun and learning. Often, you can take a creative approach to making a toy accessible to a child.

**3.** Does this toy offer a variety of ways to play? Read the instructions but also get creative. Think about the different ways a toy can be used and how it might help build skills.

**4.** Does my child have the attention needed for this toy? Take your child's attention span into account when toy shopping, but also remember that many toys can help children learn to focus on tasks.

**5.** What sort of sensory stimulation does this toy offer? Do you want to introduce more sensory stimulation or less stimulation into playtime? Look at toys from an auditory, tactile and visual per-

spective and measure that against what your child is comfortable dealing with.

**6.** What kind of a challenge factor does this toy provide? Sometimes, the right toy can offer a fun challenge your child is capable of meeting. Children with disabilities may benefit from a toy that provides different levels of challenges, allowing them to build skills at their own pace.

**7.** Does this toy hold some potential to motivate my child? Often, children who resist moving toward a goal in a traditional therapy session can be convinced to work toward that goal when toys and play are the reward.

**8.** Does this toy address some of my child's developmental goals? How can this toy be used to help your child move toward specific physical, emotional and social goals?

**9.** Does this toy have potential to help build my child's self-esteem? There are toys that help children build new skills and confidence. They range from bikes without pedals to baseball tees that allow for easy hitting.

**10.** Will my child quickly outgrow this toy? Some toys offer incredible longevity because they entertain the child in a variety of ways. Other play products have built-in stages of difficulty to continue to capture a child's attention and interest.

For more information, visit [www.AblePlay.org](http://www.AblePlay.org), e-mail [RMendoza@lekotek.org](mailto:RMendoza@lekotek.org) or call (800) 366-PLAY, ext 401.