

The Real Toy Checklist

Seven questions to ask before any toy enters the house

☐ **Is it open-ended?**

Can it be played with in many ways, or does it do one thing? The block beats the gadget because the child supplies the play.

☐ **Is the child the engine?**

The 90/10 rule: the child should bring 90 percent of the play, the toy 10. If the toy performs and the child watches, it fails.

☐ **Does it work without batteries?**

Lights and sounds replace the child's own narration. Silence is a feature: it leaves room for language.

☐ **Will it survive five years of love?**

Solid materials, repairable, no screen to crack. A toy that lasts becomes a hand-me-down, then an heirloom.

☐ **Does it invite another person in?**

The best toys create conversation and turn-taking: games, blocks, pretend props. Play is social infrastructure.

☐ **Is it honest about age?**

Match the toy to the child's actual stage, not the aspirational one. Too advanced frustrates; too simple bores.

☐ **Would it still be loved with the logo removed?**

Character merchandise borrows its appeal from a screen. A great toy earns attention on its own terms.

Score a toy 5 or more out of 7 and it will probably still be played with next year.

The research behind each question: antiscreeen.co.uk/toys-guide.html