Professional Playtime

How parents want their children's toys and playtime to prepare their children with real-world skills for the future.
Professional Playtime

Children’s playtime is not just a time for joyful creativity, but to foster real-world skills.

Parents are looking for their next holiday gift to teach their children skills that can help them get a leg-up in the fierce career market.

Implications—
Parents want to foster skills and abilities in their children that can set them up for success later in life. Brands can harness that desire, by providing toys that uncover a diverse array of skills.

01. Highlight & Foster Diverse Skill Sets
The goal is to identify and foster a diverse set of talents or skills amongst children. Go beyond architects, builders, and coders - Are there toys that inspire future botanists, AI scientists, community organizers?

02. Showcase the Possibilities
For doll brands, showcase your main characters in a diverse set of careers. Inspire children to imagine themselves in a wide range of new career possibilities, stoking the fire of their newfound skill sets.

03. It’s Not All About the Parents
When it comes to brands winter holiday campaigns, do not forget about the powerful cohort of adults buying for children that are not their own. Expand your targeting and media plans to reach those who many be clueless what to buy their 6 year old niece.

Produced by Global Insights
Future Careers

Trend Summary: Parents are looking for toys that can identify and foster diverse skills, in turn setting them up for future career prospects.

Toys are not just for joy, but also a useful tool to identify children's aptitude for skills and future career paths. Those paths can be as diverse as the current workforce, from coder to photographer to plant influencer.

By exposing kids to a vast array of toys that uncover previously hidden talents, loved ones foster a child's passion and confidence in their new-found ability. A happy side effect being they can achieve mastery before they even hit the dreaded job market.

87% of employed adults said skills they learned as children helped them achieve career success¹

+33% Growth in US sales of Explorative toys Q3 2021 vs previous year²

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²Emarketer, October, 2021.
³Reddit Internal, Global.
Gift for a 6 year old budding architect
So we are “STEM” parents (mathematician and chemist) and we have a decided architect on our hands. She creates amazing lego houses, including interiors, and they’re physically stable. She does this for fun.

We are looking into toys that can boost this talent, but many of them are rated for ages 8 and above. She’s already owning magnetiles and lego. She wants to build. Any suggestions for a 6 year old that go beyond the typical?

I LOVED K’nex at that age (and for years after)! And I’m now an architect lol. They allow similar free-play/design as Legos, as well as step-by-step instructions to build some really cool stuff.

Makedo cardboard construction tools. They are super sturdy, reusable screws and tools to use to build cardboard structures. I absolutely adore these for both individual imaginative play and in a larger group setting.
The Origin

**Toy Comeback**

The pandemic - and beyond - left parents and children reliant on screens. Days were filled with 8+ hours of screen time, from zoom school to virtual playdates. To plant their children firmly in the physical world - while simultaneously battling screen addiction - parents returned to physical toys.

On Reddit, conversations surrounding toys for all ages has grown. Adults with children in their lives are looking for the best toy to engage kids during this digital detox.

**From:** Tablet Play // **To:** Handheld Brain Teasers

1-in-2

US parents with children <11, said their child spent too much time playing video games

+59%

Growth in “sensory” toy mentions YoY²

+74%

Increase in views to r/toys from 2020 to 2021.²

97k

Communities on Reddit discussed toys in 2021²


Screen Saturation

Concern over screens lead to the resurgence of toys

Produced by Global Insights
Beyond addiction, necessary developmental skills are at risk

"The screen addiction is rewiring their brains and it was already doing that but the pandemic sped up the process. Their ability to develop coping skills and resilience is stunted. Apathy and distraction is our biggest enemy."

– Redditor via r/Teachers

Source: Reddit Internal, Global. Link
Non-Parent Guidance

The re-ignited interest in physical toys that facilitate diverse interests and skill sets will collide with holiday shopping this winter.

Parents may feel confident in their holiday shopping but those out of touch with the daily whims of children need a bit of help. The many non-parents who buy gifts for their nieces, friend’s children, and everyone in between need guidance on what the best kid gifts are. What toy won’t get forgotten in the corner come January?

Parents on Reddit create painstakingly researched and hyperlinked recommendation megathreads, saving the day for all the “rich aunts” out there.

50% Of redditors in r/toys are not parents¹

1-in-2 Of redditors purchased children’s toys during the 2021 winter holidays²

1-in-4 redditors who purchased children’s toys during the 2021 winter holidays have no children³

Physical toys were all the rage in 2021…

Toys were back in the zeitgeist last winter holiday season, with a vast majority of redditors making toy purchases.

*During the 2021 Winter Holidays

64% Redditors purchased gifts for their children under the age of 18

4-in-5 Redditors who purchased children’s toys made a purchase decision based off Reddit content

28% Redditors researched or discovered childrens toys on Reddit

Thanks!

Want to Learn More?
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